

National Evaluation of  
Writing Project  
Professional Development

Year 4

June 2011

Research conducted by SRI International

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This report was prepared by SRI with funds provided by the National Writing Project and the U.S. Department of Education for the National Writing Project evaluation.

# National Evaluation of Writing Project Professional Development

## **Year 4 Report**

June 2011

### **Prepared for:**

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Exhibits.....	iii
Acknowledgments.....	v
Executive Summary .....	ES-1
Chapter 1. Introduction .....	1
A Framework for Understanding Partnerships Between Local Writing Project Sites and Schools .....	2
Overview of the Evaluation Design.....	4
Overview of the Report .....	8
Chapter 2. Context, Capacity, and Learning at Local Writing Project Sites and Schools .....	9
Local Writing Project Sites.....	9
Partnership Schools .....	16
Conclusion.....	25
Chapter 3. Partnership Planning.....	27
Enabling Partnership Planning: Involvement of Key Stakeholders and the Provision of Time and Resources .....	27
Plan Development.....	32
Conclusion.....	38
Chapter 4. Participation in Writing Professional Development.....	41
Differences in Participation in Writing Professional Development in Partnership and Delayed Partnership Schools.....	41
Variation in Participation in Partnership Professional Development.....	43
Conclusion.....	51
Chapter 5. The Content and Nature of Writing Professional Development.....	53
Content Focus.....	53
Enabling Classroom Implementation Through Active and Coherent Professional Development .....	59
The Nature of Professional Development in Naturally Occurring Partnerships .....	64
Conclusion.....	65
Chapter 6. Effects on Teachers' Professional Practices .....	67
Teachers' Perceived Influence of Professional Development .....	67
Teachers' Instructional Practices .....	69
Collegiality and Professional Community .....	75
Conclusion.....	81
Chapter 7. Conclusion.....	83
References .....	87
Appendix A. Research Methods.....	A-1
Appendix B. Social Network Analysis.....	B-1
Appendix C. Supplemental Technical Information.....	C-1



Exhibit ES-1	Percentage of Staff Participating in Writing Professional Development.....	ES-6
Exhibit ES-2	Average Duration of Writing Professional Development for Participating Staff .....	ES-7
Exhibit ES-3	Percentage of Staff Across Partnership Schools Who Received 60 or More Hours of Professional Development Over 2 Years .....	ES-8
Exhibit ES-4	Percentage of Staff Reporting Writing Processes as Foci of Writing Professional Development, Among All Staff Participating in Writing Professional Development .....	ES-9
Exhibit ES-5	Percentage of Staff Reporting Improving Collaboration on Writing Instruction as a Focus of Writing Professional Development, Among Staff Participating in Writing Professional Development .....	ES-10
Exhibit ES-6	Percentage of Staff Participating in Active Professional Development, Among Staff Participating in Writing Professional Development .....	ES-11
Exhibit ES-7	Coherence of Writing Professional Development as Rated by Participating Staff.....	ES-12
Exhibit ES-8	Percentage of Staff Reporting That Students Are Engaged in Writing to Reflect on an Experience or Topic at Least Weekly.....	ES-14
Exhibit 1-1	Evaluation Framework .....	3
Exhibit 1-2	Data Collection Activities.....	7
Exhibit 2-1	Percentage of Teachers at Their Partnership School for 2 or More Years in 2009–10 .....	20
Exhibit 2-2	Percentage of Seventh- and Eighth-Grade ELA Teachers at Their Partnership School for 2 or More Years in 2009–10.....	20
Exhibit 2-3	Variation Across Partnership Schools in Cross-Grade Meeting Time .....	22
Exhibit 2-4	Variation Across Partnership Schools in Grade-Level Meeting Time.....	23
Exhibit 3-1	Involvement of Key Stakeholders in Planning Meetings .....	28
Exhibit 3-2	Incidence of Formal Planning Meetings .....	30
Exhibit 3-3	School/District Financial Support for Partnership Work .....	31
Exhibit 3-4	A Local Writing Project’s Framework for Diagnosing and Responding to School Context .....	35
Exhibit 3-5	Use of Context and Negotiation in Planning.....	36
Exhibit 3-6	Level of Coherence in Partnership Plans.....	37
Exhibit 3-7	Incidence of Differentiation in Plans .....	38
Exhibit 4-1	Percentage of Staff Participating in Writing Professional Development.....	42
Exhibit 4-2	Average Duration of Writing Professional Development for Participating Staff .....	43
Exhibit 4-3	Distribution of Partnership Schools by Staff Participation Rates in Partnership Professional Development.....	44
Exhibit 4-4	Duration of Partnership Professional Development Received by Participating Staff.....	46
Exhibit 4-5	Percentage of Staff Across Partnership Schools Who Received 30 or More Hours of Professional Development.....	47
Exhibit 4-6	Percentage of Staff Across Partnership Schools Who Received 60 or More Hours of Professional Development Over 2 Years .....	48
Exhibit 4-7	Number of ISI Completers Teaching in Partnership Schools as of 2009–10 .....	49
Exhibit 4-8	Proportion of Intense Partnership Professional Development Participants by Number of ISI Completers.....	50

Exhibit 5-1	Percentage of Staff Reporting Writing Processes as Foci of Writing Professional Development, Among All Staff Participating in Writing Professional Development .....	55
Exhibit 5-2	Percentage of ELA Teachers Reporting Writing Processes as Foci of Writing Professional Development, Among ELA Teachers Participating in Writing Professional Development ....	56
Exhibit 5-3	Percentage of Staff Reporting Improving Collaboration on Writing Instruction as a Focus of Writing Professional Development, Among Staff Participating in Writing Professional Development .....	57
Exhibit 5-4	Percentage of Staff Participating in Active Professional Development, Among Staff Participating in Writing Professional Development .....	60
Exhibit 5-5	Percentage of ELA Teachers Participating in Active Professional Development, Among ELA Teachers Participating in Writing Professional Development .....	60
Exhibit 5-6	Comparison of Hours of Active Partnership Professional Development, 2008–09 and 2009–10 .....	61
Exhibit 5-7	Coherence of Writing Professional Development as Rated by Participating Staff.....	63
Exhibit 5-8	Coherence of Writing Professional Development as Rated by Participating ELA Teachers ...	63
Exhibit 6-1	Extent to Which Professional Development Influenced Writing Instruction, Among Teachers Who Provide Writing Instruction.....	68
Exhibit 6-2	Percentage of Teachers Reporting That Students Are Engaged in Writing to Reflect on an Experience or Topic at Least Weekly .....	70
Exhibit 6-3	Student Engagement in Writing Processes.....	72
Exhibit 6-4	Percentage of Teacher Assignments Containing Writing Process Goals, Among Seventh- and Eighth-Grade ELA Teachers.....	73
Exhibit 6-5	Percentage of Staff Reporting Sharing Unfinished Writing with Students More than Once in the Past Month.....	74
Exhibit 6-6	Percentage of Staff Discussing Lessons or Activities for Teaching Writing at Least Monthly in Grade-Level Meetings .....	77
Exhibit 6-7	Extent to Which Colleagues’ Opinions Influence Writing Instruction, Among Teachers Who Provide Writing Instruction.....	79



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## Executive Summary

The National Writing Project comprises a network of university-based Local Writing Project sites in all 50 states dedicated to providing high-quality professional development in writing. National Writing Project sites share a common program model that includes the following:

- Developing a leadership cadre of local teachers (teacher-consultants) who have participated in the intensive Invitational Summer Institute (ISI) and continue to participate in the Local Writing Project's professional community
- Delivering customized professional development for local schools
- Providing continuing education and research opportunities for teachers

This model is guided by the core National Writing Project principle that teachers are agents of reform and that reform succeeds when teachers are supported in developing and sharing expertise with their colleagues.

The research reported here was conducted by SRI International (SRI) as part of a national, 4-year randomized controlled trial assessing the impact of National Writing Project network-sponsored school partnerships. School partnerships are one of several ways in which Local Writing Project sites engage with teachers and schools. They are long-term agreements with individual schools to provide sustained professional development customized to the needs of each school.

The evaluation is designed to describe partnership development, partnership work, and the effect of partnerships on participating schools. The core study involves 14 Local Writing Project sites and 39 schools. We refer to the 20 schools in the treatment group as “partnership” schools in this report because they were randomly assigned to form partnerships with their Local Writing Project sites. We refer to the 19 schools in the control group as “delayed partnership” schools because they will be eligible to form a partnership with their Local Writing Project sites after the study concludes. To examine implementation and assess outcomes we use teacher surveys, instructional logs, teacher assignments and associated student work, student on-demand writing prompts, written records of professional development, and interviews.

Because we wanted to examine the extent to which partnerships are initiated and planned differently in the absence of the requirements and incentives for study participation, we also undertook qualitative case studies during the 2008–09 and 2009–10 school years in “naturally occurring partnerships” (i.e., partnerships operating outside of the constraints and benefits of the evaluation).

This document—the fourth annual report on the randomized controlled trial—examines Local Writing Project and school capacity and context, partnership planning, professional development, and preliminary teacher outcomes in the second year of partnership implementation.

### **Context, Capacity, and Learning at Local Writing Project Sites and Schools**

Partnership work requires Local Writing Project sites and schools to engage with each other to plan and implement professional development. To engage in partnership work, the two organizations need capacity—the vision to motivate and focus the work and the human resources to realize the vision. Moreover, school contextual factors, including leadership, staff stability, collegiality on instruction, curriculum and accountability, influence partnership development.

**Local Writing Project sites varied in the extent to which they had a rich and multifaceted vision for partnership development that guided decisions about how to plan and provide high-quality professional development over multiple years.**

Having a rich and multifaceted vision for partnership development can guide Local Writing Project sites' partnership work and can provide ideas for a range of responses as schools' needs and contexts change. Some Local Writing Project sites had more developed visions that included

- ideas about diagnosis of school context and teacher needs (e.g., understanding the way accountability policies influence curriculum and instruction);
- a planning process for the Local Writing Project site and school to develop shared goals (e.g., creating a partnership planning committee that includes teachers);
- strategies for maintaining regular communication with school leaders (e.g., formal and informal check-ins); and
- a range of options for engaging staff in professional development (e.g., providing multiple points of entry for teachers with different levels of experience and interest, and for teachers from different content areas).

Sites varied in the extent to which their vision included these elements; less-developed visions of partnership work focused mostly on one aspect of the work.

Undergirding the National Writing Project's core principles is the notion that learning as an ongoing process is best done in a well-informed community. Given this orientation toward learning, it is not a surprise that over the course of the study, most Local Writing Project sites expanded their vision for partnership work and found working with study partnership schools had increased their capacity for partnerships.

**The capacity of Local Writing Project sites to deploy teacher-consultants with the right skills and knowledge for partnership work varied. Some Local Writing Project sites were establishing new systems and structures aimed at supporting teacher-consultants and building capacity for partnership work.**

Teacher-consultants are teachers who have completed the ISI and present professional development. In some partnerships, a teacher-consultant was the Local Writing Project site's leader for the work. In other cases, the site director led the partnership, while teacher-consultants presented some or all of the professional development. Local Writing Project sites' capacity to deliver partnership professional development hinged on having a pool of teacher-consultants who had the experience and availability to meet the variety of school and teacher needs as they changed over time.

Variation in this human resources aspect of capacity had two main dimensions: the Local Writing Project site's strategy for matching teacher-consultants with partnerships and the depth of the Local Writing Project site's teacher-consultant pool. Local Writing Projects thought differently about how to select the best teacher-consultants for a particular partnership depending on their vision for partnership work. In all cases, however, having a deep pool of teacher-consultants was important so that Local Writing Project sites could choose among teacher-consultants to ensure a good match. When Local Writing Project sites had few choices, logistical issues, such as geographical distance in rural areas or scheduling challenges, were harder to overcome. Many Local Writing Project sites were involved in efforts to increase their teacher-consultant capacity for partnership work.

**The National Writing Project provided monitoring and technical assistance to all Local Writing Project sites in many areas, including partnership work. Local Writing Project sites reported various outcomes of National Writing Project supports.**

In much the same way as the Local Writing Project site serves as a professional network and professional development provider for teachers, the National Writing Project serves as a professional network and technical assistance provider to the Local Writing Project site leaders. The philosophy of professional growth for Local Writing Project site leaders is parallel to the philosophy about how teachers learn best: site leaders have significant expertise, site leaders learn best from other site leaders, and support should be customized to local needs. This model of Local Writing Project support led to variation in the technical assistance each Local Writing Project site received from the National Writing Project network and national office staff.

Local Writing Project site directors and other leaders who participated in the technical assistance reported refining or developing aspects of their vision for partnership work. For example, a few Local Writing Project sites reported developing new strategies for planning and staffing. Other Local Writing Project sites learned strategies for supporting their teacher-consultants and promoting site-level learning. Across the sites, the technical assistance and informal networking provided an important forum for the Local Writing Project site leaders to connect, share stories about their experiences, and confirm that partnership work can be challenging but valuable and that others were struggling along with them.

**Partnership school capacity and contextual factors affected partnership development. In particular, schools' capacity to partner with Local Writing Project sites depended on having leaders who valued the work and ensured that it was a priority.**

School and district leaders play a pivotal role in instructional reforms. Leaders, people who formally or informally help develop instructional policy and influence teachers' learning environments, have the capacity to establish a sustained commitment to the reform initiative and protect time for teachers to have an extended conversation about instruction. One key aspect of school-level capacity for partnership work was the presence of a "champion." Successful champions had four main characteristics: positional authority, credibility with staff regarding instruction, an orientation toward instructional coherence, and an understanding of the partnership work. The first characteristic is required to garner resources for the partnership like funding and time. Credibility is critical for building teacher commitment to the work and setting expectations for teacher learning. School champions who focused on instructional coherence helped establish or align partnership goals with their instructional priorities for the school and influenced the content of the professional development. In this way, the partnership professional development became a credible and important strategy for teachers to achieve their goals. Finally, understanding the partnership work meant seeing the potential for school-based, customized, and sustained professional development on writing instruction to improve instructional practice and student writing. This understanding was necessary for school champions to value the partnership and, in turn, garner resources and engage teachers in the work. Across the partnership schools, school champions varied in their effectiveness.

**Over half of the partnership schools experienced principal turnover since the study began. New principals, like principals who were at partnerships schools for the study's inception, varied in the extent of their support for the partnerships.**

Over the 3 years of the study (2007–08, 2008–09, and 2009–10), the 20 partnership schools experienced considerable principal turnover: 8 schools kept the same principal, 9 had one new principal, and 3 schools had two new principals. All principals required time to understand the partnership and learn the philosophy and approach of the Local Writing Project site. For principals new to their school, the partnership was just one of many aspects of the school setting (e.g., teachers, school programs) with which they had to become familiar. The schools that had two new principals over 3 years were challenging for Local Writing Project

sites. There was less of a clear pattern for schools that had experienced leadership turnover only once during the partnership—that is, the change affected partnership development positively, negatively, or not at all.

The idea of a multiyear partnership is that a Local Writing Project site can work with a school staff over time. High rates of teacher turnover could wreak havoc with this vision for supporting instructional improvement. Fortunately, most schools in the study experienced relatively low rates of teacher turnover since the study began with a planning year in 2007–08.

### **Two interrelated aspects of schools’ instructional context, curriculum and accountability, affect their capacity to engage in partnership work.**

Across partnership schools, English/language arts (ELA) curriculum varied in the extent to which it served to unify instructional practices within schools and in the degree to which it aligned with Local Writing Project sites’ core principles. Within ELA departments in some partnership schools, instructional practices were unified by agreements about curricular materials to use or content to cover (e.g., a focus on a particular genre[s] for each grade). In these cases, Local Writing Project sites could, in a relatively consistent manner, incorporate aspects of the curriculum into their professional development, possibly facilitating implementation. Other schools did not have a consistent ELA curriculum, so that curriculum did not limit the extent to which teachers could implement ideas from professional development in their classroom. On the other hand, Local Writing Project sites were not able to uniformly weave new instructional practices into existing instructional programs.

Likewise, external accountability pressure and state testing programs served either to reinforce partnership goals and motivate teachers to participate or to shift the focus away from writing professional development. Across all partnership schools, teachers felt a great deal of pressure to have their students perform well on the state assessments. The implications of this pressure on partnership development and teachers’ ability to change their teaching practice depended on the nature of the state testing system (i.e., how well it aligned with the professional development offered by the Local Writing Project site). In several partnerships where writing played a substantive role on the state’s exam, the need to improve student writing on the state assessment drove the focus of the professional development and motivated teachers to participate in the partnership professional development. When pressures were greater in subjects other than writing, heightened accountability sometimes served to limit partnership work by reducing interest in participation.

## **Partnership Planning**

Planning sets the stage for the partnership work that will take place. In a partnership, both partners, the Local Writing Project site and the school, co-design a plan for their work together. Through the planning process, they develop a shared understanding of the goals for the partnership and the strategies for reaching them. The plans outlined a range of important topics including the frequency and dates of professional development, the target participants, and the format and content of the professional development. Ultimately, the goal of planning is to create a strategy for the delivery of coherent and relevant professional development to a critical mass of teachers. It should result in a shared vision between the school and Local Writing Project site for the basic structure of the partnership work. Schools and Local Writing Project sites varied in their approaches to planning and the extent to which they were able to co-design such plans.

### **Involving key stakeholders and ensuring that they had time to work together and the resources to support professional development enabled partnership planning.**

Bringing together people with the necessary authority, expertise, and commitment to plan the partnership is an essential first step in the co-design process. Depending on the nature of the partnership, key stakeholders can include school or district leaders and teachers who have the authority to make decisions about the partnership plan and set aside time and resources for it. Across the study partnerships, the partners varied in terms of how strategic they were about who they involved in planning and in the extent to which they were able to involve key stakeholders in the planning process. Although the majority of naturally occurring

partnerships in our sample were instigated by principals or district administrators, like study partnerships, they also varied in the extent of leader and teacher involvement in planning.

At the most basic level, the ability to jointly plan partnerships depended on allocating time for partners to come together. Formal planning through scheduled meetings provided common space for the Local Writing Project site and school to determine what they hoped to accomplish through the professional development and to establish a basic structure for the work. In a few cases, school leaders did not provide time for formal planning meetings, often because of competing demands on people's time. When school leaders did not prioritize time for planning meetings, it indicated a lack of commitment to the partnership work.

In addition to time, planning was also affected by the resources available for the professional development. Although the amount of monetary resources that study schools contributed to the partnerships varied, half of the schools provided no financial support. In contrast, because naturally occurring partnerships did not have a set amount of funding specifically for partnership work, they had to find funds to support the partnership work. In most cases, they allocated federal grants or general professional development funds toward this work, consciously choosing partnership professional development over other possibilities.

**Across the study partnerships, the quality of plans hinged on whether the partners were able to carefully diagnose and respond to school context, balance school goals with site capacity and expertise, and consider prior and future partnership professional development.**

Although Local Writing Project sites often had a framework for the professional development they provided to schools, site directors who took into account school context were able to design relevant partnership professional development. Having key stakeholders, including school or district leaders and teachers, involved in the planning process supported the development of plans that met school needs. Local Writing Project leaders and teacher-consultants also drew upon their knowledge of the school structure and relationships, curriculum, accountability requirements, and other state and district policies, as well as on observations and interactions with school leaders and teachers. Partnerships that took into account school context in the development of the professional development were among the partnerships with higher proportions of teachers participating in the professional development. In these partnerships, teachers were more interested in what was being offered or school leaders were more likely to feel it was important for their staff to attend.

In developing plans, partners had to weigh school goals and teacher needs, particularly related to curriculum and accountability, with Local Writing Project site capacity, expertise, and core principles. Across the partnerships, the amount of negotiation required varied. In some cases, aligning school goals, site perceptions of teachers' needs, and site expertise involved fairly minor negotiation and adjustment. In other cases, school goals were not well aligned with what Local Writing Projects had to offer. Those partnerships that achieved the greatest balance between school goals and site expertise and capacity crafted plans for professional development that teachers were motivated to attend, with many of these partnerships among those with the highest proportion of ELA teacher participants. Likewise, we observed that partnership goals that aligned with schoolwide goals (e.g., as articulated in school improvement plans) had greater potential to become embedded into the fabric of the school.

Developing a plan for a partnership is different from planning isolated events that may or may not connect or continuing the same plan from the prior year without adjusting for any changes or prior experience. A partnership plan changes over time and builds on prior professional development. In 2009–10, there was variation in the extent to which partners were intentional about creating plans that were coherent across events and/or years. Partnerships that were intentional about making professional development coherent from event to event or from year to year had high participation rates, either for ELA teachers or for the whole staff. Most of the partnerships with little coherence over time had among the lowest participation rates.

Differentiating the professional development and establishing multiple points of entry for teachers seeking different levels of involvement and for teachers from different content areas were strategies that helped to ensure relevance and motivate teacher participation. Planning for differentiated professional development for

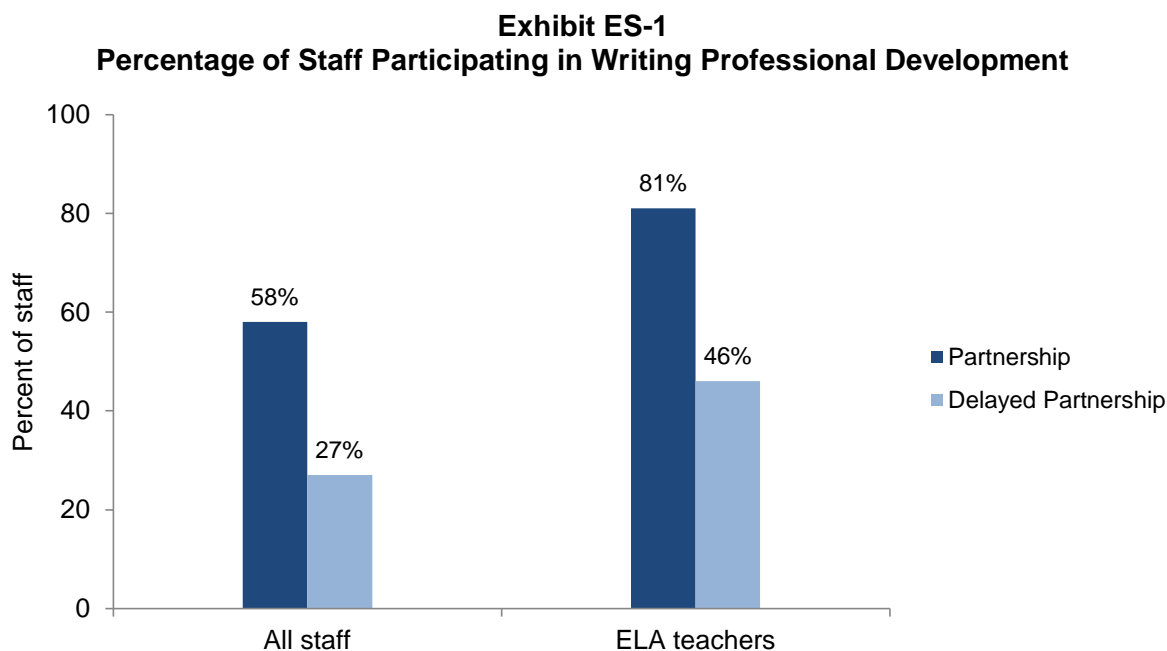
different types of teachers (e.g., math vs. ELA), for teachers starting work at different points in time (e.g., incorporating new cohorts of teachers), and for teachers seeking different levels of involvement were approaches to ensure relevance and coherence. In some cases, differentiation was also a strategy for sustainability—by integrating new teachers in the event of turnover and developing teacher leaders through the professional development. However, the need to differentiate varied depending on the partnership goals for participation. For instance, partnerships that targeted the ELA department did not need to plan differentiated professional development for teachers from different departments. Likewise, partnerships that served the same teachers every year did not need to plan multiple points of entry.

## Participation in Writing Professional Development

While providing a critical mass of teachers with professional development of sufficient duration does not guarantee that professional development will change teacher practice (because other dimensions of quality come into play), it is likely an important precondition if professional development is to lead to changes in instruction (Desimone, 2009). We investigated whether partnerships increase participation in writing professional development, the amount of writing professional development received, and the extent to which a critical mass of staff and ELA teachers received an “intense” level of professional development.

### Partnerships led to an increase in the amount of writing professional development received in partnership schools, especially for ELA teachers.

In order for partnerships to support more improvements in teacher instructional practice and student outcomes in writing than would occur in the absence of the partnership, we hypothesized that partnerships need to provide more high-quality professional development than teachers would otherwise receive. Exhibit ES-1 shows that both for all certified staff and for ELA teachers specifically, the participation rate in writing professional development was over 30 percentage points higher at partnership schools compared with delayed partnership schools.<sup>1</sup>



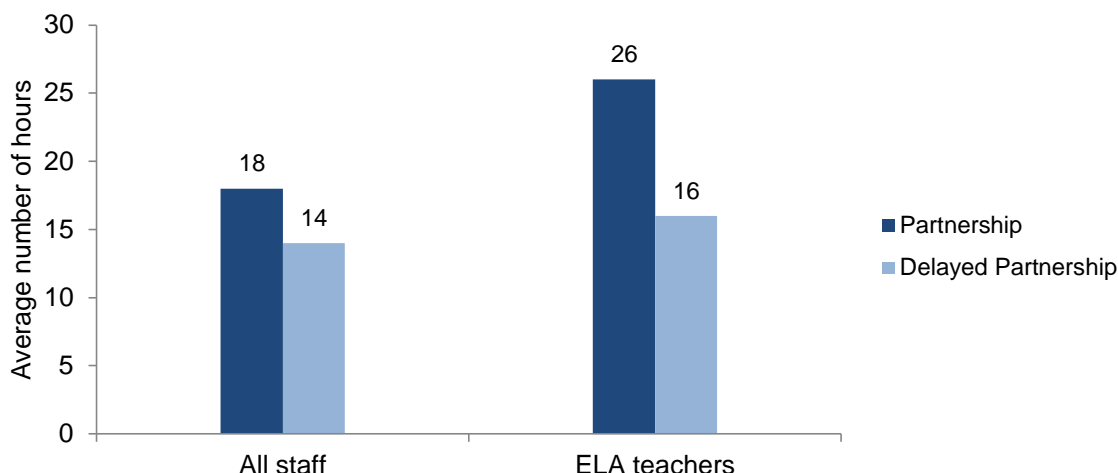
Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

<sup>1</sup> All differences are statistically significant at  $p < .05$  unless otherwise noted.



Looking at the second dimension of effective professional development, the duration of the professional development received by educators, we found a similar trend. Among ELA teachers who participated in some writing professional development, those in partnership schools received more professional development than their counterparts in delayed partnership schools. For the staff as a whole, however, there was not a statistically significant difference ( $p = 0.13$ ) in the duration of writing professional development that those who participated in writing professional development received (see Exhibit ES-2).

**Exhibit ES-2**  
**Average Duration of Writing Professional Development for Participating Staff**



Note: The difference between the percentages for all staff in partnership versus delayed partnership schools is not statistically significant ( $p = 0.13$ ).  
Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

When combined with the difference in participation rates (see Exhibit 4-1), these data show that partnerships increase the participation rate in writing professional development for all staff. Furthermore, partnerships increase the duration of writing professional development that participating ELA teachers receive.

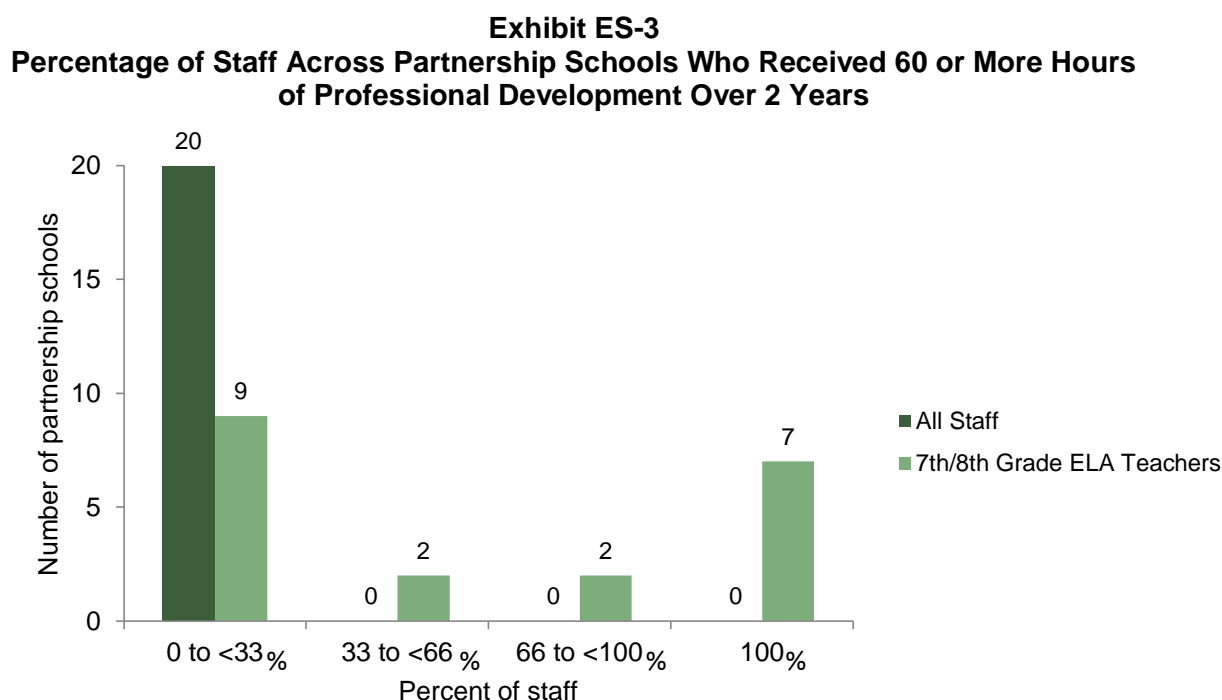
### **Participation in partnership professional development varied across partnership schools.**

When considering the whole staff (including all teachers and administrators), participation in partnership professional development tended to vary quite significantly from partnership to partnership. The rate of participation for seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers was nearly universally higher than the rate of participation for all staff and, in most partnership schools, a significant majority of ELA teachers participated in some capacity.

Wide variation existed in the duration of professional development that staff in partnership schools received. Seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers typically received a higher duration of professional development than all staff. In fact, nearly five times the proportion of seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers (44%) than all staff (9%) received 30 or more hours of partnership professional development during the second year of partnership implementation.

To describe cumulative participation patterns within partnerships, we examined the number of partnerships that had engaged a critical mass of staff and ELA teachers to participate “intensely” in partnership professional development (defined as at least 60 hours) over the 2 years of partnership implementation. No partnerships had more than one-third of all staff participating in 60 or more hours of professional

development (see Exhibit ES-3). In contrast, 11 partnerships had 33% or more of their seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers participating in at least 60 hours of professional development, and 7 of these partnerships had 100% of their seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers participating “intensely.”



Source: 2009–10 quarterly partnership monitoring.

These data suggest that some partnerships had a reasonable opportunity to build capacity with a critical mass of seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers, though most have made fewer inroads with the staff as a whole.

One professional development activity that provided some teachers with an “intense” duration of partnership professional development was the Invitational Summer Institute (ISI). In addition to providing teachers with more than 100 hours of professional development as a strategy to build their individual capacity to change writing instruction in their own classrooms, some Local Writing Project sites tried to use the ISI as a strategy for supporting change in partnership schools. Five partnerships have had two or more teachers who completed an ISI since partnership inception teaching at the partnership school during 2009–10; an additional five partnerships had one teacher. Ten partnerships had no teachers who completed an ISI since partnership inception. The teaching assignments of ISI participants paralleled the teaching assignments of other high intensity participants. While there were participants from across the content areas, the majority (60%) of ISI participants were seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers.

## The Content and Nature of Writing Professional Development

Knowing the content of writing professional development enables an understanding of what aspects of teacher practice might be impacted by partnerships. Additionally, whether the professional development had features prior research identifies as related to changes in teacher practice—opportunities for active learning and coherence—affects the likelihood that professional development will change teacher practice.

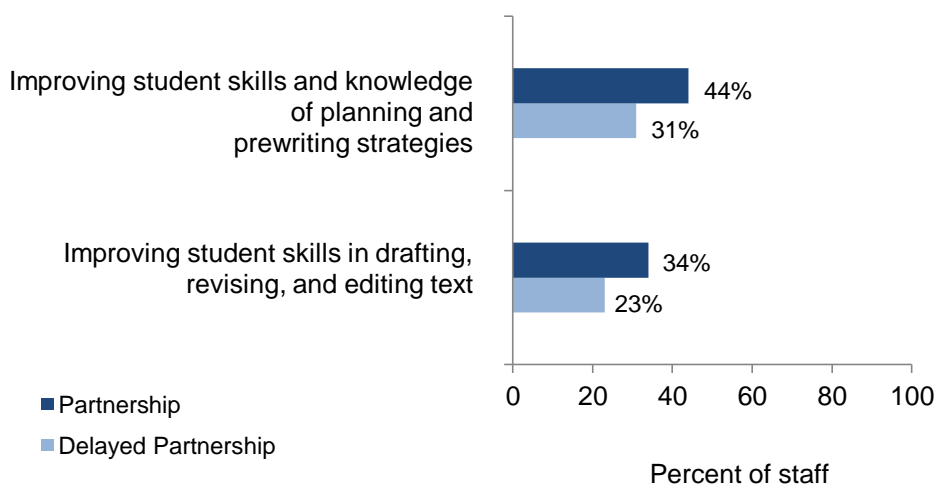
**Partnership professional development covered diverse topics, but four common foci emerged: writing to learn in the content areas, teaching writing processes, engaging teachers as writers, and building teacher community.**

Professional development only is able to affect teacher practice in areas covered. Although, the partnership professional development focused on a wide variety of topics, in 2009-10, four major foci emerged for the work: writing to learn, teaching writing processes, engaging teachers as writers, and building teacher community. Beyond these four major foci, the focus of partnership professional development was diverse.

Most partnerships focused on **writing to learn in the content areas**, a tool for encouraging metacognition. As we define it here, writing to learn is using writing as a tool to learn other content and does not directly address discipline-specific writing. In writing-to-learn professional development, ELA and content area teachers developed a range of strategies for incorporating more writing into their classes from using exit slips to writing diary entries from the perspective of historical figures. Typically, teachers from a variety of content areas were present for professional development focused on writing to learn.

Content-focused professional development aims to deepen teachers' knowledge of their subject area and their pedagogical content knowledge. Two of the main foci of professional development in partnership schools were: teaching writing processes and engaging teachers as writers. Writing professional development in partnership schools more frequently focused on **teaching writing processes** than writing professional development at delayed partnership schools (see Exhibit ES-4).

**Exhibit ES-4**  
**Percentage of Staff Reporting Writing Processes**  
**as Foci of Writing Professional Development,**  
**Among All Staff Participating in Writing Professional Development**



Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

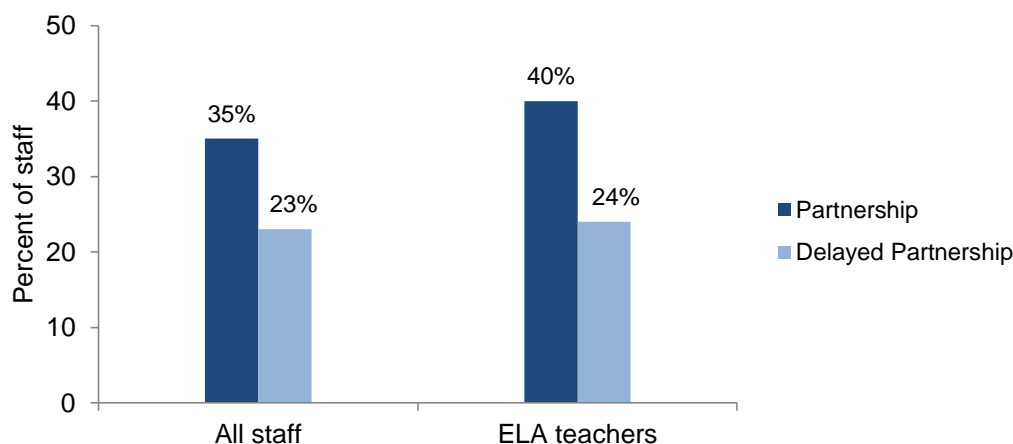
This focus is particularly important as it gets to the foundation of how the National Writing Project and the field view effective writing as a process of creating and revising with input from others.

Another type of “content-focused” partnership professional development was **engaging teachers as writers**. Many sites engaged teachers as writers with two aims: to help them overcome their own discomfort with writing and to help them understand the process that students go through when they write. In order to help participants overcome this dislike or fear, teacher-consultants created opportunities for them to write. At

the same time, by writing, teachers can gain an understanding of what the process entails, and this understanding can inform their teaching.

**Building teacher community**, a National Writing Project core principle, was a primary or secondary goal of some partnership professional development. In the partnership schools, professional development aimed at building teacher community mainly focused on enabling teachers to use their work time together more productively. As Exhibit ES-5 shows, more ELA teachers who participated in writing professional development at partnership schools reported receiving professional development around improving teacher collaboration on writing instruction than their counterparts in delayed partnership schools. (The difference approached statistical significance for all staff,  $p = .06$ ).

**Exhibit ES-5**  
**Percentage of Staff Reporting Improving Collaboration on Writing Instruction**  
**as a Focus of Writing Professional Development,**  
**Among Staff Participating in Writing Professional Development**



Note: The difference between the percentages for all staff in partnership versus delayed partnership schools is not statistically significant, although it approaches statistical significance at  $p = 0.06$ .  
Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

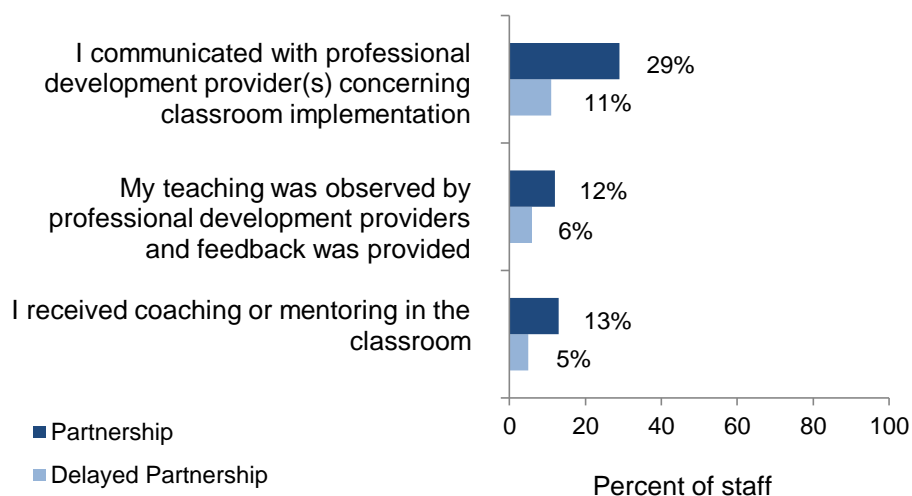
Though **teacher leadership** was not one of the four main content foci, across partnership schools, about half of the Local Writing Project sites made concerted efforts to develop teacher leaders, including inviting teachers to conferences and the Invitational Summer Institute (ISI) and offering professional development in the form of support sessions, yearlong support for a cohort of teacher leaders, or a leadership strand outside of school for ISI graduates.

**Among teachers who participated in at least some writing professional development, teachers at partnership schools were more likely to report participating in “active” professional development than their counterparts at delayed partnership schools.**

Active learning encompasses a number of activities, including demonstration lessons and classroom observations followed by feedback, discussion, and reviewing student work (Desimone, 2009). Across three indicators, and among teachers participating in at least some writing professional development, the percentage of teachers who reported participating in active professional development at partnership schools

was more than twice as high as the percentage of teachers who reported participating in this type of professional development at delayed partnership schools (see Exhibit ES-6).

**Exhibit ES-6**  
**Percentage of Staff Participating in Active Professional Development,  
Among Staff Participating in Writing Professional Development**



Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

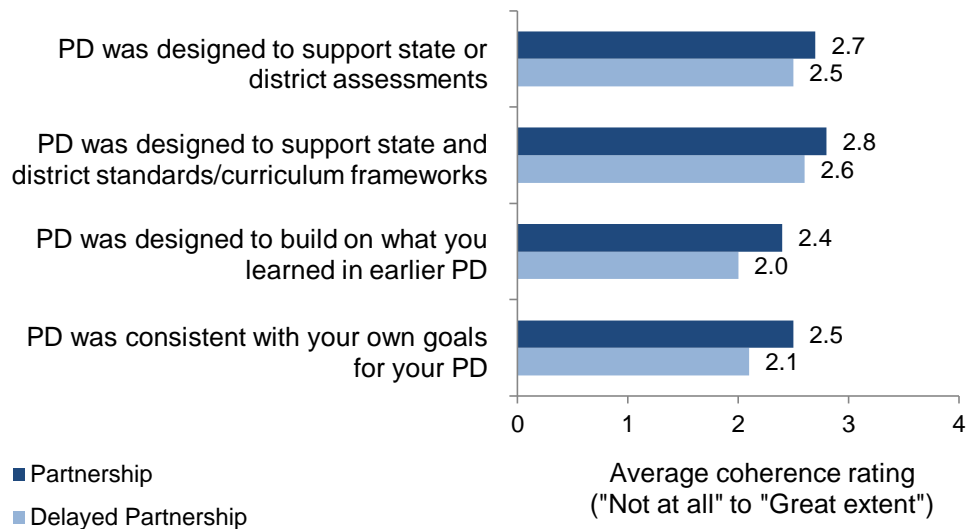
Partnership professional development that supported active learning primarily came in four formats: classroom coaching, demonstrations lessons, support sessions, and inquiry projects. Almost always, Local Writing Project sites offered more than one of these formats at their partnership schools. As the partners' relationships developed, professional development moved closer to the classroom. In 2009–10 relative to 2008–09 for all partnerships in the aggregate, the time spent on this type of active professional development more than tripled. This greater openness to allowing teacher-consultants into the classroom may also reflect deepened trust between teacher-consultants and the teachers they work with. However, some teacher-consultants continued to find it challenging to enter classrooms because of teacher resistance.

Finally, across the partnerships, teachers engaged in active, reflective professional development. Common strategies included writing to a prompt, engaging in hands-on activities, trying an activity based in research, and allowing time for reflection and discussion.

**Teachers in partnership schools were more likely than teachers in delayed partnership schools to report that the writing professional development they participated in was “coherent”—that is, it was consistent with their own professional development goals, built on their previous professional development experiences, and supported state and district standards, frameworks, and assessments.**

Staff in partnership schools who participated in writing professional development rated the professional development as more coherent than did their counterparts in delayed partnership schools (see Exhibit ES-7). Results suggest that partnership professional development more often built on what teachers had learned in earlier professional development and that it took teachers' goals into account more successfully than the professional development in which teachers participated in delayed partnership schools.

### Exhibit ES-7 Coherence of Writing Professional Development as Rated by Participating Staff



Note: Differences between the coherence ratings by staff at partnership versus delayed partnership schools were not statistically significant for the first two survey items listed above (professional development was designed to support state or district assessments; professional development was designed to support state and district standards/curriculum frameworks), although differences approached statistical significance at  $p = 0.07$  and  $p = 0.08$  respectively.

Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

### Professional development at naturally occurring partnership schools paralleled that at study partnership schools.

The content and nature of professional development at naturally occurring partnership schools was notably similar to the professional development at study partnership schools. It addressed a variety of topics but especially focused on writing to learn. Teacher-consultants at naturally occurring partnerships also worked to develop teacher leaders and actively engage teachers as they learned new strategies. As with the professional development provided in study partnership schools, this approach focused on giving teachers the opportunity to work with their own writing at the same time that they deepened their understanding of how students learn to write.

As was the case with study partnership schools, beyond these foci, the naturally occurring partnership professional development focused on a wide variety of topics. These included an abbreviated Japanese lesson study, technology, and writing in different genres. The reasons for these foci also varied. For instance, at one school, the site's interest and expertise drove the focus on technology while at another school this same focus came about because of teacher interest in the topic.

## Effects on Teachers' Professional Practices

This study has an overarching hypothesis: teachers who receive sufficient, high-quality professional development will change practices related to the content of that professional development. Further, changes are more likely if a critical mass of teachers in a school participates, because collective participation enhances the impact of the program on individuals. We explore this hypothesis by addressing three main questions:

1. What are the effects of partnership professional development on teachers' perceived influence of professional development?
2. What are the effects of partnership professional development on teachers' instructional practices?
3. What are the effects of partnership professional development on the professional communities in schools?

In the final year of the study, we will extend our hypotheses and research questions to encompass student outcomes, reporting on findings from analyses of student work in response to teacher assignments and on-demand writing prompts administered in seventh- and eighth-grade classrooms.

### **Partnership professional development has had a positive impact on teachers' perceptions of the influence of professional development on their writing instruction.**

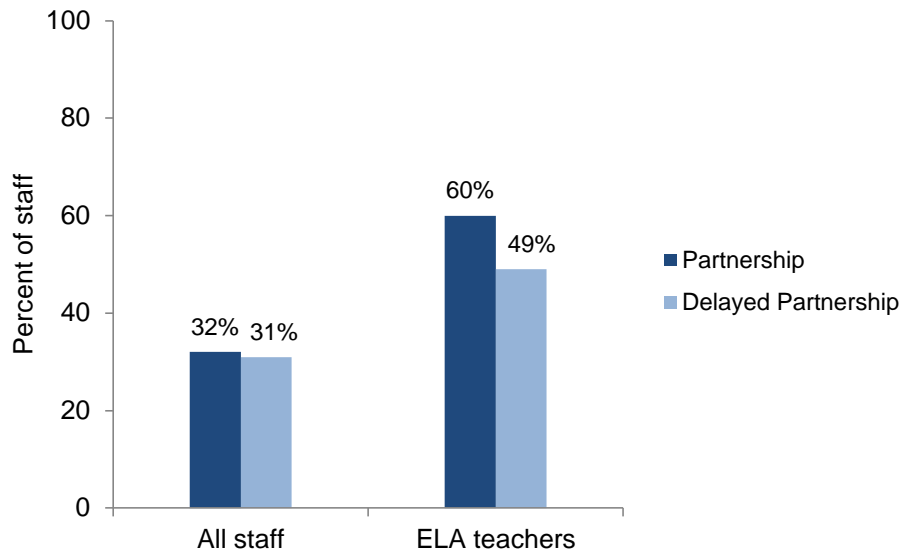
Teachers in partnership schools reported that professional development influenced their writing instruction to a greater extent than their counterparts in delayed partnership schools. In both partnership and delayed partnership schools, ELA teachers reported that professional development influenced their writing instruction to a greater extent than non-ELA teachers. However, teacher interest in partnership professional development and their implementation of ideas learned through partnership work varied within schools. Looking across partnerships, the variation appeared to be due to a variety of factors, including teaching assignment and personal interest in changing writing instruction in ways aligned with the professional development.

### **Partnership professional development had an impact on some teacher-reported practices that are closely aligned with the content of the professional development; there is limited evidence of effects on teachers' use of writing processes in instruction.**

ELA teachers in partnership schools were more likely than those in delayed partnership schools to have students engage in writing to reflect on an experience or topic at least weekly, as shown in Exhibit ES-8.

There was no statistically significant difference between responses of staff members at large from partnership versus delayed partnership schools.

**Exhibit ES-8**  
**Percentage of Staff Reporting That Students Are Engaged in Writing to Reflect on an Experience or Topic at Least Weekly**



Note: The difference between the percentages for all staff in partnership versus delayed partnership schools is not statistically significant.

Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

We also examined the responses of the subset of teachers who had received 60 or more hours of partnership professional development in the first 2 years of partnership implementation (2008–09 and 2009–10).<sup>2</sup> We found that over time this subgroup of teachers increasingly reported having students write to reflect at least weekly. Qualitative data support the finding that the frequency of reflective writing has increased due to partnerships, with some ELA and non-ELA teachers alike implementing writing-to-learn activities.

**There is currently limited evidence of partnerships’ impacts on the extent to which teacher assignments required students to construct new knowledge.**

We asked teachers to collect and submit assignments that represented their “best opportunity to teach and assess student writing skills” in each grading period. More rigorous assignments require students to construct knowledge, challenging them to move beyond the mere reproduction of information they have been exposed to. Tasks that emphasize construction of knowledge require students to do more than summarize or paraphrase information they have read, heard, or viewed; these tasks require students to generate or explore new ideas through interpretation, analysis, synthesis, or evaluation of information (Matsumura et al., 2002; Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001; Shkolnik et al., 2007) By the end of the second year of implementation, there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups in the extent to which teacher assignments required students to construct knowledge.

**To date, there is limited evidence of partnerships’ impacts on the frequency of student engagement in writing processes or the frequency of writing processes in instruction. On**

<sup>2</sup> It is important to recognize that teachers were not randomly selected into this group and, in many but not all cases, volunteered to participate in this higher level of professional development. Thus, any changes in this subgroup of participants do not generalize to all teachers in partnership schools and cannot be causally linked to the intensity of participation.



**the other hand, partnerships had an impact on one of the writing process goals manifested in teacher assignments, as well as the frequency with which teachers shared their own unfinished writing with students.**

Using the teacher survey, we created scales to describe student engagement in writing processes and the frequency with which teachers assign writing processes. There were no significant differences between partnership and delayed partnership schools in the responses of all staff or of ELA teachers.

In the analysis of teacher assignments, scorers categorized teachers' descriptions of goals with respect to how much attention teachers gave in assignments to articulating rhetorical purposes and decisions, to structure, to conventions, and to writing processes. While there are no statistically significant differences between teachers at partnership and delayed partnership schools in the majority of these measures, teachers in partnership schools are more likely than teachers in delayed partnership schools to report that one of the intended goals of their assignments was to provide students with opportunities to practice planning skills in the crafting of writing products.

Finally, one aspect of using writing processes in instruction that was covered in the professional development in many partnerships was the use of models. Our survey asked staff to report the frequency (from "Not at all" to "More than 10 times") with which they shared unfinished and finished writing with their students in the past month. Teachers in partnership schools were more likely to report that they shared unfinished writing with their students more than once in the past month than their counterparts in delayed partnership schools. On the other hand, there is no statistically significant difference between partnership and delayed partnership teachers in their reported frequency of sharing finished writing with students.

**In partnership schools, duration of professional development is related to help in writing among colleagues, and help in writing from colleagues with a significant amount of professional development is related to improved instructional practices.**

Analyses of the effects of writing professional development on teachers' self-reports of interactions with specific colleagues show that in partnership schools where more teachers received professional development of a longer duration (at least 60 hours in Years 1 and 2), teachers reported receiving help in writing from a larger number of teachers. Beyond effects on collegial interactions, analyses of the social network data from the teacher survey show that teachers who received help from colleagues who participated in at least 30 hours of writing professional development in Years 1 and 2 increased the frequency with which they taught writing processes and exposed students to a breadth of written genres in instruction. While small, these effects on teachers' self-reported practice were above and beyond direct effects of their own participation in writing professional development and were similar in magnitude to those direct effects.

**Participants in the ISI took on varied roles in their partnership schools subsequent to their ISI participation, with a small proportion assuming leadership roles in their partnerships.**

When examining the effects that the ISI had on participants, we see that most participants reported one or more of the following effects: improved instruction, entry into the Local Writing Project site's professional community, and increased leadership roles in their partnerships. For participants in the ISI who took on increasing leadership roles within their school's partnership, the characteristics of the teachers themselves, prior to enrolling in the ISI are important in regard to successfully assuming leadership roles. For teachers who were informal or formal leaders in their school prior to attending the ISI, the ISI sometimes catalyzed their leadership, focusing it on partnership work. Partnerships sometimes facilitated teachers taking on partnership leadership subsequent to the ISI by establishing formal roles and processes for teacher leaders. Most typically these include roles in planning the partnership or planning and presenting professional development.

## Conclusion

The National Writing Project's network of Local Writing Project sites offer a wide range of professional development for K-12 teachers across the United States. School partnerships are one of the mechanisms through which the Local Writing Project sites deliver professional development. The National Writing Project does not have a uniform model for partnership work. Instead, the nature of partnership work is shaped locally, adapted based on the needs of schools and the capacities of Local Writing Project sites.

Variations in the capacity of Local Writing Project sites and partner schools led to uneven planning processes. **Planning processes that were characterized by efforts to diagnose and respond to the school context, balance school goals with site capacity and expertise, and consider prior and future professional development were more likely to result in a plan for high-quality, highly adaptive professional development.**

**While partnerships increased the amount of writing professional development received in partnership schools,** there was significant variation in the amount of professional development the teachers received. Partnership professional development frequently focused on writing to learn, teaching writing processes, building teacher community, and engaging teachers as writers. It exhibited markers of effective professional development to varying degrees.

Participation in partnership professional development had uneven effects on teachers. On the one hand, partnership professional development appears to have impacted teachers' perceptions of the influence of professional development on their practice, the use of writing-to-learn strategies, and collegiality on instruction. There is limited evidence that partnership professional development has had an impact on the frequency with which writing processes are taught in partnership schools.

## Chapter 1. Introduction

The National Writing Project comprises a network of university-based Local Writing Project sites in all 50 states dedicated to providing high-quality professional development in writing. National Writing Project sites share a common program model that includes the following:

- Developing a leadership cadre of local teachers (teacher-consultants) who have participated in intensive Invitational Summer Institutes and continue to participate in the Local Writing Project's professional community
- Delivering customized professional development for local schools
- Providing continuing education and research opportunities for teachers

This model is guided by the core National Writing Project principle that teachers are agents of reform and that reform succeeds when teachers are supported in developing and sharing expertise with their colleagues.

The National Writing Project, with its focus on intensive, content-focused support for teachers, is often cited as a model professional development effort—and in fact it has served as the model for a number of initiatives, including the extensive California Subject Matter Projects. Much of the research and scholarly writing on the National Writing Project has been laudatory (e.g., Lieberman & Woods, 2003). However, little rigorous research was conducted on the National Writing Project, which began in 1974, for its first two decades. In recent years, some independent studies have shown positive effects of National Writing Project professional development on writing instruction and on writing performance (e.g., Olson & Land, 2007). Additionally, the National Writing Project has sponsored the Local Site Research Initiative (LSRI), a program where local sites submit proposals to receive grants and technical support to conduct quasi-experimental evaluations of some aspect of their work. As a set, the LSRI studies show that professional development offered by the National Writing Project has positive effects on a range of outcomes (National Writing Project, 2010).

The research reported here was conducted by SRI International (SRI) as part of a national, 4-year randomized controlled trial assessing the impact of National Writing Project network-sponsored school partnerships. School partnerships are one of several ways in which Local Writing Project sites engage with teachers and schools. They are long-term agreements with individual schools to provide sustained professional development. Local Writing Project sites have substantial discretion about how to conduct partnership work. In fact, the professional development provided in school partnerships can include all of the types of professional development offered by Local Writing Project sites. However, partnerships are distinct from other National Writing Project professional development in that the Local Writing Project site tailors the program to the specific needs of partner schools, typically offering some events only to staff at the partner school. As a result of the customization to school needs that is central to the National Writing Project's model of partnership work, there is substantial variation across partnerships on many dimensions.

This document is the fourth report on the randomized controlled trial. The first-year report described the study design and the recruitment of sites and schools (Gallagher, Penuel, Shields, & Bosetti, 2008). The second-year report demonstrated that the random assignment had led to similar schools in the partnership (treatment) and delayed partnership (control) groups; it also described partnership planning during the baseline year (Gallagher et al., 2009). The third annual report profiled the sample of schools and Local Writing Project sites participating in the evaluation and described partnership planning, the professional development provided by Local Writing Project sites to partnership schools, and preliminary outcomes (Gallagher, Woodworth, Bosetti, McCaffrey, & Shields, 2010). This report analyzes planning, professional development, and preliminary teacher outcomes in the second year of partnership implementation. In the remainder of the introduction, we describe our revised framework for understanding the National Writing Project-sponsored partnerships, outline the evaluation design, and provide an overview of the report.

## A Framework for Understanding Partnerships Between Local Writing Project Sites and Schools

After 2 years of data collection (the study methods are described in the following section), we have refined our understanding of how National Writing Project-sponsored partnerships are formed. Our revised framework, which is presented graphically in Exhibit 1-1 on the following page, guides our data collection and our overall approach to data analysis. The logic is clear: Local Writing Project sites create partnerships with local schools and plan professional development, which in turn is meant to improve teacher practice. Finally, student outcomes improve as a result of the new teacher practices.

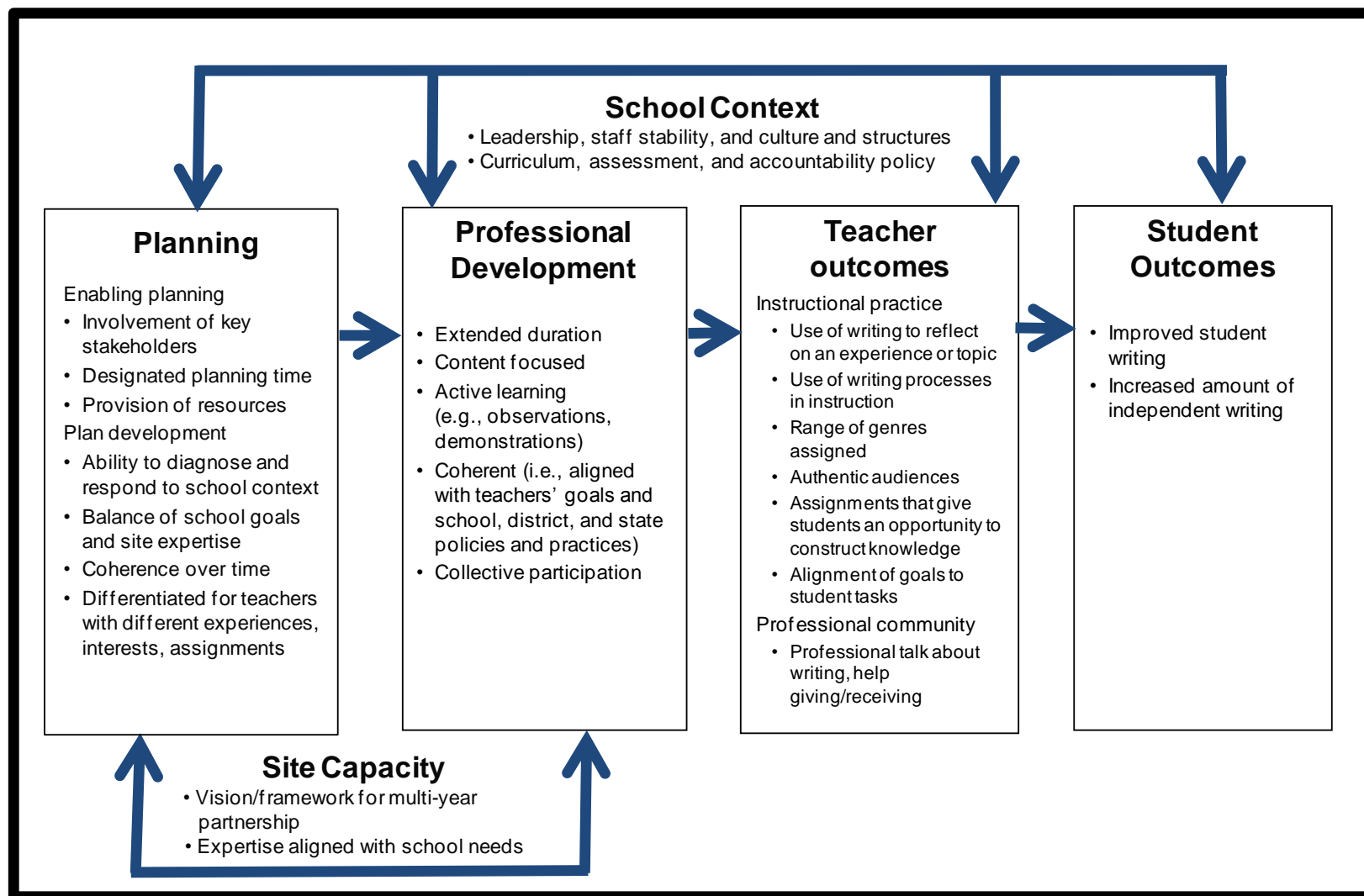
This apparently simple linear framework belies the complexity of what we have learned from our fieldwork. We began the study with well-developed understandings and constructs for describing student outcomes, teacher practices, and the characteristics of professional development. But we had a less well-developed understanding of the partnership planning process. In this revised framework, we underscore the complexity of this process with the identification of seven dimensions along which planning varied across the partnerships. Stakeholder involvement and the provision of time and resources enable the planning process while diagnosing and responding to school context, balancing school goals with site capacity and expertise, and consideration of coherence over time and differentiation for teachers with different experiences, interests, and assignments support meaningful plan development.

Moreover, the framework underscores the importance of two contextual factors: site capacity and school context and capacity. Local Writing Project sites vary widely in the degree to which they are prepared to take on the creation of a partnership and the extent to which they possess the capacity to respond to their partner schools' needs. How the partnership formed and the specific professional development activities reflect this variation. Schools' participation in partnerships is shaped by their contexts, many aspects of which are outside their control. Of particular importance are external curriculum, assessment, and accountability policies, adherence to which may support or hinder partnership development. And like the Local Writing Project sites, schools have their own capacity (e.g., leadership, staff stability, and cultural norms) for partnership work. These forces acting on—and from within—schools can serve either to motivate schools and teachers or to limit the schools' abilities to engage fully in partnership work. The combination of the complexity of the planning process and the variety of contextual factors affecting both local sites and their partner schools produces a great deal of variation in how partnerships formed and evolved. This theme runs throughout the report.

As we have from the study's inception, we rely on recent research on effective professional development to define dimensions of quality that affect that extent to which professional development is likely to influence teacher practice. The foundation of this work is a seminal piece by Garet et al. (1999) that lays out six best practices for professional development. Building on this work, Desimone (2009) outlines five key features of effective professional development: content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation. Picking up on the theme of partnership variation, we want to highlight the fact that the precise content focus of the professional development, which in the case of partnerships is locally determined, will likely determine the precise teacher and student outcomes that could be achieved.

In examining the aspects of teachers' instructional practice and professional interactions (or teacher outcomes) measured by this evaluation, it is important to consider the variation in partnerships. Randomized controlled trials require defining the treatment, mediators, and desired outcomes *a priori*. Because the National Writing Project's partnership model requires that the treatment vary locally, the constructs measured needed to be broad at inception. By casting a wide net, we hoped to measure the constructs important for understanding the effectiveness of study partnerships, across varied partnership foci and contexts. One implication of the decision to measure a range of outcomes is the possibility that we have measured some outcomes that are unrelated to the treatment (at least in some partnerships). On the other hand, if the professional development partnerships offer includes foci that were not part of our preconceptions of the treatment, we might not measure (or might not measure sufficiently) the logical outcomes of that partnership work.

**Exhibit 1-1  
Evaluation Framework**



## Overview of the Evaluation Design

The purpose of the evaluation is to describe partnership development, partnership work, and the effect of partnerships on participating schools. Below we list the research questions, explain how Local Writing Project sites and schools were recruited into the study, define “partnership” for the purposes of the study, discuss a nonexperimental addition to the core study, and describe the data collection methods.

### Research Questions and Design Summary

The evaluation seeks to address eight research questions:

1. Does the **writing performance** of students in classes taught by teachers in National Writing Project partnership schools improve to a greater extent than does that of students in a comparison group taught by teachers without National Writing Project partnership experience?
2. Do **other student outcomes** related to writing performance (e.g., attitudes toward writing, use of best practices and strategies for writing, amount of independent writing) in classes taught by teachers in National Writing Project partnerships improve to a greater extent than do those of students in a comparison group taught by teachers without National Writing Project partnership experience?
3. Do any effects observed in Questions 1 and 2 **increase with time of involvement for teachers** (e.g., as teachers’ exposure to partnership professional development increases)?
4. Do any effects observed in Questions 1 and 2 **increase over time for students** as they experience repeated exposure to teachers with National Writing Project partnership experience?
5. How are **mediating factors** (e.g., teachers’ knowledge, skills, dispositions, and instructional behaviors) affected by participation in National Writing Project partnership activities?
6. How do **changes in mediating factors** identified pursuant to Question 5 above **relate to observed changes in student performance**?
7. What are the **essential dimensions of the professional development** offered through National Writing Project school partnerships, and which of them contribute significantly to teacher change and student learning?
8. How does participation in National Writing Project partnerships **impact teachers’ professional community** and, in turn, **impact teacher and student outcomes**?

To address these questions, we are employing a randomized controlled trial involving 39 schools. We refer to the 20 schools in the treatment group as “partnership” schools in this report because they were randomly assigned to form partnerships with their Local Writing Project sites. We refer to the 19 schools in the control group as “delayed partnership” schools because they will be eligible to form a partnership with their Local Writing Project sites after the study concludes.

The study follows an experimental design with a baseline year (2007–08) during which partnership schools could plan the work with their Local Writing Project site but could not commence professional development. From 2008–09 through 2010–11, the Local Writing Project sites and partner schools could implement their partnerships. As described below, delayed partnership schools could continue their business as usual, but could not seek new writing professional development unless required to by their state or district.

### Recruitment of Local Writing Project Sites and Schools for the Randomized Trial

SRI began recruiting Local Writing Project sites and schools for the 4-year evaluation in spring 2007. The National Writing Project sent site directors a link to an SRI survey assessing preliminary interest in participating in a randomized trial to study Local Writing Project partnership work with schools serving middle grades. SRI received responses to this survey from 168 Local Writing Project sites, with 124 of the sites indicating preliminary interest in participating. In June 2007, SRI sent a second survey to these 124 Local Writing Project sites asking the sites to recruit two or four schools that met the following requirements:

1. They served middle-grade (seventh- and eighth-grade) students.
2. They had “minimal or no prior experience” with the Local Writing Project site. More specifically, they could not have more than two teacher-consultants (teachers who had completed an Invitational Summer Institute, or ISI) on staff at the school, no administrators could have attended an ISI, and the school could not have received more than 30 hours of Local Writing Project professional development over the preceding 2 years.<sup>3</sup>
3. They were willing to be randomly assigned to either the treatment or control condition.

The second and third requirements were imposed so that a school could appropriately function as an experimental control in the study. The second requirement is especially noteworthy when thinking about interpreting the results of the current study. Many partnerships that form outside of the study have prior experience with their Local Writing Project site that would exceed this threshold.

As an incentive for participating, control schools receive \$8,000 per year to spend on other educational purposes aside from writing professional development and at the conclusion of the study can undertake a subsidized partnership with their Local Writing Project site. To participate in the study, delayed partnership schools agreed not to seek out new professional development in writing or participate in Local Writing Project professional development during the life of the study. Delayed partnership schools were allowed to continue existing initiatives in writing and participate in writing professional development that was mandated by the state or district. Individual teachers were also allowed to pursue writing professional development provided by sources other than the Local Writing Project.

As an incentive for participating and to provide a level of financial stability that increases the likelihood that partnerships are sustained over 3 years, Local Writing Project sites receive \$12,000 per year to subsidize each partnership.<sup>4</sup> For Local Writing Project sites with one partnership school, this is the equivalent of a moderate-sized grant from the National Writing Project. Local Writing Project sites with two schools receive \$24,000 per year, a large amount compared to most grants the National Writing Project gives to local sites.

Thirty-four Local Writing Project sites responded to the second survey, each nominating two to four schools for participation. To be eligible, principals in those schools needed to sign a form indicating an understanding of study terms and eligibility. SRI received signed forms from principals in 98 schools, recruited by 32 of the Local Writing Project sites. From those 32 Local Writing Project sites, SRI randomly selected 14 sites with interested and eligible schools and randomly assigned pairs of schools to the treatment and control groups.<sup>5</sup>

Eight sites brought in a single pair of schools and six sites brought in two pairs, for a total of 40 schools. In fall 2007, before data collection began, one delayed partnership school dropped out of the study due to concerns about data collection. In spring 2010, two partnership schools dropped from the study. One left because the Local Writing Project site closed; the other, a school that had been reconstituted after the first year of the study and continued to face significant accountability pressure, discontinued the partnership and all data collection because writing professional development was no longer a priority.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The ISI prepares teachers to become teacher-consultants—that is, to assume teacher leadership roles at the Local Writing Project site and in schools. A school that entered the study with two or more teacher-consultants might not be able to fully assume “control” status because those teachers might purposely or inadvertently spread Local Writing Project ideas in their schools.

<sup>4</sup> Unlike actual National Writing Project grants, however, sites receiving the funds were selected at random from all volunteers, and sites’ work in connection to these funds is not subject to specific monitoring or technical assistance from the National Writing Project.

<sup>5</sup> Some Local Writing Project sites and schools that were initially selected were later determined to be ineligible or withdrew prior to the start of data collection. In these cases, replacement Local Writing Project sites and/or schools were selected and subsequently randomly assigned to experimental conditions. The first and second year reports provide more details on this process.

<sup>6</sup> All quantitative data, and some qualitative data, were collected from both partnership schools through 2009–10; both schools are included in the analyses presented in this report. Neither school will contribute data in the final year of the study, 2010–11.

## **Qualitative Study of Naturally Occurring Partnerships**

Randomized controlled trials are highly valued because their strong internal validity enables causal inferences. However, the design is vulnerable in terms of external validity, especially if aspects of the treatment or context are specified or controlled. In particular, we wanted to examine the extent to which partnerships were initiated and planned differently in the absence of the requirements and incentives for study participation described above. To that end, we undertook qualitative case studies during the 2008–09 and 2009–10 school years in “naturally occurring partnerships,” (i.e., partnerships operating outside of the constraints and benefits of the evaluation). These case studies focused on partnership initiation and planning, with some data collected on the professional development offered, but no measurement of outcomes.

In 2008–09, we sought nominations from the National Writing Project and recruited five partnerships with schools serving middle grades from four Local Writing Project sites. From these exemplar partnerships, we hoped to learn more about partnerships run by Local Writing Project sites with strong track records of partnership work.

In 2009–10, we recruited a sample of four partnerships that had started recently in Local Writing Project sites participating in our randomized trial. We wanted to compare naturally occurring and study partnerships within Local Writing Project sites we knew, holding constant site capacity and length of partnership, to explore how study constraints and benefits might be affecting the partnership work that is the focus of our core study. We use these nine cases in the chapters on planning (Chapter 3) and the nature of professional development (Chapter 5) to reflect on the external validity of our findings.

## **Data Collection Activities**

We use multiple data collection strategies to address the research questions. Exhibit 1-2 describes the data collection activities for the study, the constructs covered, the respondents, the frequency, and whether comparable data were collected from naturally occurring partnerships in 2008–09 and 2009–10. By collecting data from multiple sources over time, the design enables us to describe partnership work (implementation of the intervention) in detail, compare partnership schools to delayed partnership schools over time, and compare study partnerships to naturally occurring partnerships on some dimensions. See Appendix A for a detailed discussion of research methods.



**Exhibit 1-2**  
**Data Collection Activities**

Data collection activity	Topics covered	Respondents	Frequency	Administered to NOP schools?
Teacher survey	School context, teacher professional community, teacher professional practices	All certified staff	Annually	Yes (2008–09 only)
Teacher log	Instructional practices	7th- and 8th-grade ELA teachers	2 weeks/ year <sup>a</sup>	No
Teacher assignments	Instructional practices	7th- and 8th-grade ELA teachers	None in 2008–09; 4 times/ year all other study years	No
Student work	Student opportunities to learn	7th- and 8th-grade ELA teachers' students	None in 2008–09; 2 times/ year all other study years	No
On-demand writing prompts and reflections <sup>b</sup>	Student outcomes	7th- and 8th-grade ELA teachers' students	Fall/spring each year	No
Interviews	National Writing Project site context, school context, partnership planning, professional development, teacher professional community, teacher practices	Site directors, professional development providers, teachers, administrators	Fall/spring each year	Yes
Quarterly partnership monitoring	Partnership goals, professional development provided, teacher participation in professional development, resource expenditures	Site directors, professional development providers	Summer, fall, spring each year	No

Note: ELA = English/language arts.

<sup>a</sup> During the 2007–08 school year, we collected 4 weeks of teacher logs from participating seventh- and eighth-grade English/language arts teachers.

<sup>b</sup> To increase the quality and consistency of scoring, all student on-demand writing prompts will be scored during the summer of 2011, with findings described in the final report.

## **Overview of the Report**

The remainder of the report is organized according to key components of our conceptual framework. Chapter 2 describes the sites and schools forming partnerships, including their capacity to work with each other and contextual factors affecting partnership development. Chapter 3 describes the planning processes for the partnership professional development. Chapters 4 and 5 describe the writing professional development provided in partnership schools and, where possible, compares it with the professional development in delayed partnership schools. Chapter 4 describes the participation, describing who participated and how much professional development they received. Chapter 5 describes the nature of the professional development, including the content focus and the ways in which it is designed to support changes in classroom practice. Chapter 6 provides preliminary data on a range of teacher outcomes. Student outcomes are not reported here as this is an interim report. Student outcomes data will be analyzed in the final year and presented in our final report. Chapter 7 provides a summary and offers implications.

## Chapter 2. Context, Capacity, and Learning at Local Writing Project Sites and Schools

Partnership work requires Local Writing Project sites and schools to engage with each other to plan and implement professional development. To engage in partnership work, the organizations need capacity—the vision to motivate and focus the work and the human resources to realize the vision. In this chapter, we explore the extent to which Local Writing Project site leaders and teacher-consultants have developed—and are developing—the vision and resources required to plan and provide the professional development. We explore the role the National Writing Project plays in providing technical assistance and building the capacity of Local Writing Project sites to lead partnership work. Likewise, we examine the partnership schools’ capacity to plan and benefit from the partnership professional development. We conclude the chapter with an examination of school contextual factors that may influence partnership development including leadership, staff stability, collegiality around instruction, and curriculum and accountability.

### Local Writing Project Sites

Fourteen Local Writing Project sites comprise the sample for the study. Here we describe how these 14 sites varied in their capacity to form partnerships and provide partnership professional development. We first discuss two main elements of capacity: a vision for partnership work and the human resources necessary to realize that vision. We then discuss how Local Writing Project sites, with support from the National Writing Project national office, were working to increase their capacity to partner with schools, and we describe key sources of support for partnership work.

#### Vision for Partnership Work

Having a rich and multifaceted vision for partnership development can guide Local Writing Project sites’ partnership work and can provide ideas for a range of responses as schools’ needs and contexts change. Some Local Writing Project sites began the evaluation with little understanding of how partnerships can be a powerful professional development model or how to implement them (see Gallagher et al., 2010). As one Local Writing Project site director said reflecting on his initial vision of partnerships, “I don’t think I understood what it meant to have a partnership... and why [the National Writing Project] kept asking about [partnerships]... as much as I do now...It’s a chance to really have...[an] in-depth impact...in a way that even the best workshops can’t have.” Here we describe the variation in the extent to which Local Writing Project sites had a vision of partnership work in the third year of the evaluation (i.e., after a planning year and during the second year of partnership implementation) and then show that Local Writing Project sites’ vision has increased over time.

**Local Writing Project sites varied in the extent to which they had a rich and multifaceted vision for partnership development that guided decisions about how to plan and provide high-quality professional development over multiple years.**

Some Local Writing Project sites had more developed visions that included ideas about diagnosis of school context and teacher needs (e.g., understanding the way accountability policies influence curriculum and instruction), a planning process for the Local Writing Project site and school to develop shared goals (e.g., creating a partnership planning committee that includes teachers), strategies for maintaining regular communication with school leaders (e.g., formal and informal check-ins), and a range of options for engaging staff in professional development (e.g., providing multiple points of entry for teachers with different levels of experience and interest, as well as for teachers from different content areas). In contrast, other Local Writing Project sites’ vision for partnership work included a narrow range of ideas about how school partnerships set goals and then work to achieve them.

An example of a more highly developed vision for partnership work came from a Local Writing Project site that had a framework for engaging the school in a planning process, building strong relationships, and providing responsive professional development experiences. This Local Writing Project site's framework included an effective and ongoing process for diagnosing and responding to the school context and an iterative planning process that incorporated the voices and needs of both teachers and school/district leaders. The process took time to develop and refine, but through the process the organizational leaders have developed strong relationships that were tested in negotiating the professional development in 2009–10 (see Chapter 3 for details).

One component of this iterative process is that both organizations made efforts to ensure that the partnership professional development was aligned with the school goals and was in sync with other district-driven professional development. For example, during the planning year the Local Writing Project site invited a district leader to be a guest at their Invitational Summer Institute (ISI) and other events so that he would develop a rich understanding of their work and philosophy. The district, in turn, invited Local Writing Project leaders to attend district professional development so that they could find alignment between the two major initiatives. The partnership professional development included sessions designed for a broad cross-section of teachers, including short one-session workshops designed to introduce the Local Writing Project as well as a weekly fall workshop. There were more—and more intense—professional development offerings for English/language arts (ELA) teachers including a multi-day summer workshop, a full-day retreat, a weekly spring workshop, and in-class demonstrations and coaching. Another Local Writing Project site that had a highly-developed vision for partnership work focused on the importance of expanding school partnerships to become district partnerships. The site's co-director emphasized the importance of district support to sustain the partnership over time and the benefits of bridging practice across school levels.

Less developed visions of partnership work focused mostly on one aspect of the work, such as presenting a series of engaging professional development events at the partnership school. These visions often left out key elements of partnership work, such as long-term planning or developing school-based leadership for partnership implementation, which distinguish partnerships from other inservice professional development provided by Local Writing Project sites.

A site with a well-developed vision for partnership work drew an important distinction between partnership work and other forms of professional development, especially those in which teacher-consultants work in isolation. The site director noted that a hallmark of a partnership is when teachers are actively engaged attending workshops that are both site-sponsored and partnership-based and when the school or district sends more teachers over time. The co-director conceived of partnerships as such:

When I think of a partnership, it's a growing relationship between the [Local Writing Project site] and school district and building capacity...with the partners. This is where I might differ from other people's perception. When you have an isolated [teacher-consultant] doing isolated work, I don't really consider that a partnership with a district...I also think about, are we doing workshops there, are we bringing coursework in, are other teachers coming from their school to [Writing Project] events. I guess, to me, a partnership is when you actively engage: attending workshops, courses, sending more teachers.

An example of a less developed vision for partnership work came from a site that did not prioritize partnership work, lacked formal systems to support teacher-consultants engaged in partnership work, and did not have systems to support internal communication. In the third year of the study, the Local Writing Project site's limited framework for partnership work was evident in their missteps in planning. The site leaders appeared to place all responsibility for planning on individuals at the school and district who may not have had enough experience with the Local Writing Project to adequately represent them. In addition, the lack of a framework for partnership work was evident in their limited vision for the professional development they proposed. In the first year of implementation (2008–09), a relatively large number of teachers participated in relatively intense professional development. During the second year of implementation, Local Writing Project site leaders continued to propose a school-based course and the ISI despite feedback that those formats were

not going to work for the school. As a result, the Local Writing Project site missed opportunities to support teachers as they attempted to change their practice.

Another example of a less-developed framework came from a Local Writing Project site with some history of partnerships. In this case, a critical component of the framework was missing: the ability to diagnose school needs and interests and modify their model appropriately. The Local Writing Project site's framework included desired school characteristics (a core base of teacher-consultants on staff), a strategy for expanding the work (recruiting other teachers to attend the ISI), a strategy for supporting teachers as they implement new instructional strategies in their classroom (a practicum), a teacher leadership program, and a preferred content focus (narrative). Despite informal feedback mechanisms, the teacher-consultant missed two pieces of information critical to the partnership's development. First, the focus on narrative left a lot of content-area teachers on the outskirts of the professional development. Second, one of the teachers the teacher-consultant selected to lead some of the school-based work had a polarizing effect on the staff.

As these examples show, Local Writing Project sites differed in the aspects of partnership work to which they explicitly attended. Further, Local Writing Project sites' visions of partnership work have steadily evolved.

**Over the course of the study, most Local Writing Project sites expanded their vision for partnership work and found working with partnership schools had increased their capacity for partnerships.**

Undergirding the National Writing Project's core principles is the notion that learning as an ongoing process that is best done in a well-informed community. In this framework, knowledge comes from many sources: theory and research, the analysis of practice, and the experience of practice.<sup>7</sup> Although the National Writing Project typically expresses its stance toward learning in the context of teachers as learners, the idea holds true for Local Writing Project site leaders as well. And, given this orientation toward learning, it is not a surprise that Local Writing Project site leaders reported learning more about partnerships and expanding their vision of partnership work through the experience of developing and implementing partnerships.

Regardless of the extent to which Local Writing Project sites entered the evaluation with a well-developed vision of partnerships, most Local Writing Project sites refined their vision of partnership work. The variation in initial vision for partnership work tended to relate to Local Writing Project sites' experience with partnerships. At the outset, some Local Writing Project sites with less extensive or related prior partnership experience drew on their deep knowledge of schools as organizations to build a nuanced vision of partnership work as they went along. Over the course of the study, most Local Writing Project sites expanded their vision by developing potential strategies for responding to specific issues arising in their partnerships and building broader understandings of partnership work in general. Some Local Writing Project site leaders said the study partnerships have helped them develop new strategies that they can use in future partnerships. One Local Writing Project site director explained that the study partnership forced the site to grow in new ways:

I think it [the work with the partnership school] has given us a kind of repertoire...it's sort of like as a teacher your difficult class always makes you devise things, but then you can then bring them to other settings...it's forced us to work in ways we weren't used to working and that was good for us because now we have more strategies to use in different situations.

One aspect of partnership work that several Local Writing Project sites developed was an understanding of the necessity of and strategies for building relationships with potential partnership leaders in schools with little prior experience with their Local Writing Project site. Other Local Writing Project sites have better developed several aspects of their vision for partnership work. For example, two teacher-consultants leading a

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<sup>7</sup> The learning stance described here is a synthesis of descriptions of the National Writing Project found in Lieberman and Wood (2002) and Stokes (2005), and from the core principles of the national program model retrieved on January 25, 2011, from the National Writing Project's website at <http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/doc/about.csp>.

study partnership explained that they had become more aware of the need to think globally about a school and to build strong relationships with teachers: “[At the study partnership school], we had to figure it out that that was what we needed to do, to look at school culture...in the big sense of where teachers are in [the] school world and how our working with them and the strategies that we can give them for their classroom are going to work into that.” Her colleague added, “And the power of the relationships in all that. The relationship-building piece has probably been the biggest ‘aha.’ ”

One Local Writing Project site that began with few conceptions of how a school partnership might unfold now has a framework for developing partnerships that includes strategies for launching the partnership (building a support base with teachers), building the partnership (having teachers spread the word to other teachers and administrators, moving slowly), and involving school leaders (making sure they have shared goals and will promote the professional development). Another Local Writing Project site that entered the study with many active teacher-consultants and a history of establishing long-term partnerships with schools was surprised to find developing the partnership with their study school challenging. The difference, the site leaders thought, was the way the partnership was initiated; teachers in the study school did not contact them with an expressed need for professional development in writing instruction. Over the course of the study, the Local Writing Project site has come to see the importance of having strategies to build teacher buy-in by building on perceived strengths and interests, not just self-identified needs.

Even though most Local Writing Project sites refined their vision for partnership work, during the third year in the study (first year was a planning year, second year was the first year of professional development) there was still variation in the depth of Local Writing Project site’s vision for partnership work, and some sites appeared to struggle to apply what they learned in the process. The Local Writing Project site that had a less developed vision for partnership work described above appeared hampered by its previous partnership experience in that it appeared to constrain its ability to work in new ways with a partner school. The site director explained that other partnerships began where they had a base of teachers who believed in their model and agreed on a plan. In hindsight, he thought he should have taken into account some of the ideas proposed by the school. The variation in partnership vision had substantial influence on partnership planning, as described in Chapter 3.

### **Teacher-Consultants**

Teacher-consultants are teachers who have completed the ISI and present professional development. In some partnerships, a teacher-consultant was the Local Writing Project site’s leader for the work. In other cases, the site director led the partnership, while teacher-consultants presented some or all of the professional development. Local Writing Project sites’ capacity to deliver partnership professional development hinged on having a pool of teacher-consultants who had the experience and availability to meet the variety of school and teacher needs as they changed over time. This section describes dimensions of teacher-consultant capacity on which the 14 Local Writing Project sites varied and then strategies Local Writing Project sites used to increase their capacity.

### **The capacity of Local Writing Project sites to deploy teacher-consultants with the right skills and knowledge for partnership work varied.**

Variation in this human resources aspect of capacity had two main dimensions: the Local Writing Project site’s strategy for matching teacher-consultants with partnerships, and the depth of the Local Writing Project site’s teacher-consultant pool. Local Writing Projects thought differently about how to select the best teacher-consultants for a particular partnership depending on their vision for partnership work. If a Local Writing Project site’s vision for partnership work was centered on the content of professional development, it often attempted to match teacher-consultants with partnership schools based on desired content expertise. In some partnerships, this meant either a rotating group of teacher-consultants each delivered one workshop in a series (e.g., document-based questioning, evaluation) or a teacher-consultant led a multisession course (e.g., a

three-session course on digital storytelling) while the planning was led by another teacher-consultant or Local Writing Project site director.

In one of these partnerships, the Local Writing Project site director, who was active in planning but did not attend workshops, provided one-on-one coaching and support to teachers at their request. In contrast, other Local Writing Project sites emphasized relationships in selecting teacher-consultants for partnership work. Such Local Writing Project sites assigned a teacher-consultant with knowledge of the school or district to be the face of the Local Writing Project site in the partnership. These lead teacher-consultants were active in planning and also provided some professional development themselves or hosted a series of events led by different teacher-consultants. For example, one partnership offered a graduate-level course facilitated by a co-director from the Local Writing Project site and a local teacher-consultant. The course featured a number of writing strategies so the facilitators brought in guest presenters for approximately half of the course meetings. Only one Local Writing Project site used the partnership as a training vehicle for teacher-consultants. Regardless of the matching strategy, Local Writing Project sites consistently sought teacher-consultants who had skills and experience in presenting professional development.

Having a deep pool of teacher-consultants was important so that Local Writing Project sites could choose among teacher-consultants to ensure a good match. Local Writing Project site leaders balanced a number of considerations when selecting teacher-consultants to lead partnership activities. In most cases the selection was a reflection of the Local Writing Project site's strategic use of its human resources and demonstrated an understanding of the school context, teacher needs, and the resources available within its network. For example, Local Writing Project site leaders mentioned a desire to have an on-site teacher-consultant who could be at the school during the school day and who could provide coherence across professional development events. Being able to offer professional development during the contract day not only led to more flexibility in scheduling, but also allowed the partnership to offer job-embedded professional development, such as demonstrations or observations (described in Chapter 5), which can be conducted only when students are present. Local Writing Project site leaders also described specific skills (e.g., strong interpersonal skills to navigate communication concerns at the school, presentation skills, and ability to work with adults) and knowledge (e.g., knowledge of state assessments, state and district policies, and content expertise) important for teacher-consultants. Finally, having multiple, available teacher-consultants to choose from also enabled Local Writing Projects to change teacher-consultants if the fit between a particular individual and the partnership school was less successful than desired or if the teacher-consultant's availability changed.

When Local Writing Project sites had few choices, logistical issues, such as geographical distance in rural areas or scheduling challenges, were harder to overcome. In some cases, the burden fell on Local Writing Project site directors to conduct all or most of the professional development and planning. In these situations, we noted a potential for burnout on the part of the Local Writing Project site director and the inability to offer as much professional development as necessary to reach the partnership's goals. In partnerships where teacher-consultants lived or worked far away from the partnership school, it was more difficult to have frequent, in-person professional development. Local Writing Project sites that had few teacher-consultants who did not hold teaching positions were limited in their abilities to offer professional development during the school day.

Some Local Writing Project sites struggled more than others to find the necessary knowledge, skills, and experience within their pool of teacher-consultants. One Local Writing Project site had trouble finding teacher-consultants who could establish credibility and build trust with a school staff that saw themselves as the experts. In another partnership mentioned above, the Local Writing Project site decided to rotate teacher-consultants through the partnership school in a series of workshops in an effort to build capacity. This strategy became particularly problematic when, in the third year, the site director went on sabbatical and no one person had the experience to step in to lead the partnership.

Regardless of the Local Writing Project site's strategy for matching teacher-consultants with their partnership school and the depth of their pool of available teacher-consultants, many sites were focused on supporting the teacher-consultants leading the partnerships and building their long-term capacity to partner with schools.

## **Some Local Writing Project sites were establishing new systems and structures aimed at supporting teacher-consultants and building capacity for partnership work.**

Many Local Writing Project sites were involved in efforts to increase their teacher-consultant capacity for partnership work. Some were engaged in systemic attempts to improve capacity, either by changing leadership structures or instituting structures or processes to support teacher-consultants. Changes in leadership structure to improve partnership capacity created new roles for teacher-consultants in some Local Writing Project sites. For example, to expand its partnership work, one Local Writing Project site assigned a co-director for partnerships and another for inservice. Another Local Writing Project site redesigned its leadership structure, as well as its approach to site capacity building and staff development, in light of what it had learned in conducting recent partnerships. To increase demand for school partnerships, this Local Writing Project site was developing study groups for the fellows from the ISI. In the study groups, the fellows were to identify school-level issues that they would like to work on with their peers at school and with the support of the Local Writing Project. The Local Writing Project site leaders plan to convert the projects developed by the fellows into partnerships with the fellows' school. To build their site-level capacity to do partnership work, the Local Writing Project site leaders will provide professional development for the study group coordinators.

To build their capacity for partnership work, other Local Writing Project sites created support structures or processes for the teacher-consultants leading partnership work. These support systems were designed to address teacher-consultants' immediate needs while attempting to share lessons learned across a broad site-level leadership team. Some Local Writing Project sites had a leadership team to support the teacher-consultants leading the partnership work. In these cases, site-level leadership teams, including site directors, functioned as thinking partners for the teacher-consultants to work through the next steps in planning the partnership and shaping the professional development experiences. These teams frequently used technology such as Google docs to facilitate communication. Other sites were building capacity by involving all teacher-consultants who were engaged in partnership work in collective support sessions and documenting those sessions. In this way, sites were formalizing a learning process for teacher-consultants and building the site's capacity for partnership work over time. One site that was systematically working to build its capacity to partner with urban schools sought input from the teachers at the study school to develop a symposium on urban schools. A site leader explained: "We need to know more about how to work in urban schools and we're dependent on the expertise of teacher leaders."

Local Writing Project sites that were not engaging in systemic capacity-building efforts found other ways to support teacher-consultants. Local Writing Project site leaders made themselves available to respond to questions, talk through issues, and attend meetings as requested. Ongoing communication was aided, in a few Local Writing Project sites, by technology such as Nings and Google docs. A few Local Writing Project sites took their teacher-consultants to state and national conferences.

The extent to which there will be sufficient time for these efforts to build teacher-consultants' capacity for partnership work to pay dividends within the timeframe of this study remains unclear. However, it is clear that Local Writing Project sites engaging in the more systemic capacity-building efforts appear to be leveraging study participation (and other extant partnership work) to expand future partnership work.

## **The National Writing Project as a Resource for Capacity-Building**

While there was still variation in both Local Writing Project sites' vision for partnership work and the capacity of their teacher-consultant pool, in 2009–10 capacity in both areas was increasing. The National Writing Project played a role in facilitating the increase in capacity through offering direct support to all interested Local Writing Project sites in the National Writing Project network (i.e., not solely those participating in the evaluation) and by providing opportunities for networking among Local Writing Project sites participating in the evaluation.



**The National Writing Project provided monitoring and technical assistance to all Local Writing Project sites in many areas, including partnership work. In 2009–10, The National Writing Project began offering support for partnership work provided to Local Writing Project sites participating in the evaluation.**

One role of the National Writing Project is to offer technical assistance to Local Writing Project sites through regular monitoring and by convening events. Additionally, when the National Writing Project offers grants to Local Writing Project sites, they typically provide monitoring and technical assistance around those particular grant programs and the Local Writing Project site leaders know they can call on the national office for support. During the baseline year of the study, the National Writing Project and SRI agreed not to offer monitoring and technical assistance around the grants that subsidize the partnership work in the study because of concerns regarding the research design. In addition, the national office largely avoided discussing the work of study partnerships as part of regular monitoring and technical assistance. For their part, the Local Writing Project site leaders avoided contacting the national office and each other to discuss their strategies, progress, or concerns. One exception to the pattern of limiting the access of Local Writing Project sites participating in the evaluation to information on partnership work was the National Writing Project's Annual Meeting, which continued to offer sessions on partnership work (open to all Local Writing Project sites).

Since this abstention was a deviation from typical National Writing Project practices, SRI and the National Writing Project agreed during the first year of partnership implementation that study partnerships should be treated as other work in the National Writing Project. As a result, beginning after the first year of partnership implementation, the National Writing Project supported some efforts designed to increase the capacity of Local Writing Project sites to do partnership work, including:

- The National Writing Project hosted a partnership institute (in summer 2009) open to all Local Writing Project sites in the network identified as having expertise in partnership work to share.
- National Writing Project leaders included discussion of study partnerships, along with other relevant topics, as part of regular monitoring and assistance processes.
- The National Writing Project hosted informal “working meetings” at National Writing Project-sponsored events (e.g., the Annual Meeting, Urban Sites Network meeting, and partnership institute) where leaders from Local Writing Project sites participating in the evaluation could meet informally to network.

This late start in providing routine support to the Local Writing Project sites engaged in this study left little time to realize effects during the second year of implementation (2009–10).

In much the same way as the Local Writing Project site serves as a professional network and professional development provider for teachers, the National Writing Project serves as a professional network and technical assistance provider to the Local Writing Project site leaders. The philosophy of professional growth for Local Writing Project site leaders is parallel to the philosophy about how teachers learn best: site leaders have significant expertise, site leaders learn best from other site leaders, and support should be customized to local needs. As operationalized, this philosophy means that a core National Writing Project strategy for offering support is to provide opportunities for site leaders to share ideas directly with each other. As one technical assistance provider explained, the Local Writing Project site directors are leaders in the field and respected university professors, so it does not make sense to vet their ideas through the national office before sharing. Local Writing Project sites also are free to select which ideas they adopt and how they adopt them. Finally, interactions between site directors and staff in the national office vary based on the needs of Local Writing Project sites. This model of Local Writing Project support led to variation in the technical assistance each Local Writing Project site received from the National Writing Project network and national office staff, but site leaders were agreement about the availability of assistance. As one Local Writing Project site director said, “I can always get help from the Writing Project national [office]; they are a phone call away.”

## **Local Writing Project sites reported various outcomes of National Writing Project supports.**

Local Writing Project site directors and other leaders who participated in the technical assistance reported refining or developing aspects of their vision for partnership work. For example, a few Local Writing Project sites reported developing new strategies for planning and staffing. One Local Writing Project site director made a “paradigm shift” from relying on the expertise of her teacher-consultants to drawing on the “wisdom in the room,” or the teacher knowledge, in the school. Her initial approach to planning had involved matching the specific areas of expertise of her teacher consultants to the school’s needs, with the site leading the discussion of what the professional development could look like. Through the technical assistance, she conceived an approach to planning where principals and teachers led the discussion of what the partnership work might look like at their schools and led much of the professional development themselves when feasible (i.e., when teachers within the school had the requisite expertise).

Other Local Writing Project sites learned strategies for supporting their teacher-consultants and promoting site-level learning. For example, one Local Writing Project site that runs multiple partnerships developed a new process to support teacher-consultants leading partnerships in which all teacher-consultants engaged in partnership work meet for a collective support session (described above). Another Local Writing Project site leader reported learning about a staffing strategy in which a novice teacher-consultant leverages the expertise of established teacher-consultants who only have time for short-term work, while offering an extended course for the partnership school.

The technical assistance and informal networking provided an important forum for the Local Writing Project site leaders to connect, share stories about their experiences, and confirm that partnership work can be challenging but valuable and that others were struggling along with them. At least one Local Writing Project site director with more related partnership experience left the technical assistance sessions feeling relatively confident about her approach to partnership development and the professional development it was providing. In fact, site leaders felt that they were able to contribute substantively to the conversation and be a resource to others.

Partnership development is a function of the capacity and context of Local Writing Project sites and schools. We turn now to a discussion of the partnership schools, focusing on their capacity to plan and implement the partnership and the contextual factors that appear to influence partnership development.

## **Partnership Schools**

The National Evaluation of Writing Project Professional Development school sample is comprised of 39 schools—20 partnership schools (i.e., schools assigned to form a partnership with a Local Writing Project site) and 19 delayed partnership schools (i.e., schools assigned to the control group). In past reports, we showed that, in the aggregate, schools assigned to partnership and delayed partnership conditions were equivalent in terms of school size, student characteristics, and school performance, and were comparable at baseline on the treatment and outcome measures used in the evaluation.

This section updates information about partnership schools from our most recent (Year 3) report, where we described school characteristics and contextual factors that seemed to affect partnership development. Drawing on publicly available data, as well as data collected through our teacher survey and interviews with teachers and school and district leaders, we describe school leadership, staff stability, collegiality on instruction, and curriculum and accountability in partnership schools. We found that schools varied in their capacity to partner with Local Writing Project sites to improve teachers’ professional practice and student writing.

### **Leadership**

School and district leaders play a pivotal role in instructional reforms. Leaders, people who formally or informally help develop instructional policy and influence teachers’ learning environments, have the capacity

to establish a sustained commitment to the reform initiative and protect time for teachers to have an extended conversation about instruction. Either school or district leaders can play this critical role for schools engaging in a partnership with a Local Writing Project site. Alternatively, if these leaders are ineffective in the partnership work, they can block Local Writing Project site access to teachers or reduce teacher engagement in partnership work.

**Schools' capacity to partner with Local Writing Project sites depended on having leaders who valued the work and ensured that it was a priority.**

One key aspect of school-level capacity for partnership work was the presence of a “champion.” Successful champions had four main characteristics: positional authority, credibility with staff regarding instruction, an orientation toward instructional coherence, and an understanding of the partnership work. The first characteristic is required to garner resources for the partnership like funding and time. Credibility is critical for building teacher commitment to the work and setting expectations for teacher learning. For example, in one school where a principal with relatively low staff credibility attempted to champion the partnership during its first year of implementation, broad teacher support never materialized and most teachers implemented ideas introduced by the partnership in a *pro forma* way. The partnership moved into its second year without the momentum of widespread teacher support.

School champions who exhibited the third characteristic, focusing on instructional coherence, helped establish or align partnership goals with their instructional priorities for the school and influenced the content of the professional development. In this way, the partnership professional development became a credible and important strategy for teachers to achieve their goals. At one school, the principal worked to align partnership professional development with broader school goals. In the process, he decided on a new structure for the professional development that helped to engage more teachers and make the effort sustainable. A focus on instruction did not always lead to support for the partnership. In one school that was reconstituted twice and was under intense accountability pressure, the new principal assessed the school's needs and determined that the partnership professional development was not a priority so the partnership ended in 2009–10. Understanding the partnership work, the fourth characteristic, meant seeing the potential for school-based, customized, and sustained professional development on writing instruction to improve instructional practice and student writing. This understanding was necessary for school champions to value the partnership and, in turn, garner resources and engage teachers in the work.

The four requirements for a school-based “champion” for partnership work can be met by any school or district administrator who has sufficient positional authority and credibility. Because the partnerships in the evaluation are with schools, principals were the most likely formal leaders to be involved in the partnership. However, district leaders (e.g., ELA coordinators or superintendents) played key roles in some partnerships. It is worth noting that while teacher support for partnerships is critical, teachers acting alone lack the authority to make schoolwide decisions and garner resources. Teacher leaders are most successful when they have support from formal school leaders who may or may not play an active role in planning and implementing the partnership.

Across the partnership schools, school champions varied in their effectiveness. Two examples illustrate the ends of the continuum. In the partnership described previously in which the school champion, a district administrator, attended part of the ISI as a guest to develop his understanding of the Local Writing Project philosophies and practices, he became committed to the partnership, led the vision and goal setting for the partnership from the school side, protected resources for the partnership, occasionally participated in the professional development, and followed up with teachers about what they learned and how they could use it in their practice. He even partnered with the Local Writing Project site director to write a grant for additional resources and included the site director and teacher-consultants in the district's professional development so they could align the two initiatives.

At the other end of the continuum is a partnership school with an instructional coach, the school champion, who did not understand the Local Writing Project practices and who unintentionally sabotaged partnership

professional development by not following through on commitments she made in planning meetings. Her strained relationship with the teachers was marked by a lack of credibility around instruction and her involvement in the professional development was limited to attending a session to chastise teachers. In this case the school principal is not an instructional leader and had not participated in the partnership beyond offering passive support through formal approval of teacher participation. The chosen champion for the work had positional authority and a supposed focus on instruction but lacked the credibility with staff and understanding of the work required to engage teachers and support partnership planning in meaningful ways. In this partnership, the Local Writing Project site leaders have learned to work around the school champion to plan and implement the partnership directly with teachers.

Other principals were neither particularly effective nor ineffective. These principals passively supported the partnership, refraining from creating barriers to teacher participation but not actively engaged in planning the professional development. In one case, the principal's passive support was viewed positively by teachers who felt that the principal trusted their judgment regarding their professional development. Additionally, passive support from a principal was sometimes sufficient to enable teachers to champion partnership work. In the partnership mentioned previously that ended in 2009–10, the teachers did not have the authority or desire to continue the work without administrative support. Chapter 3 describes how the variation in school leaders' support for partnership work played out in the planning process.

All school champions require time to understand the work, determine their support, and implement the partnership. Teachers need time as well to determine their support and implement changes to their instructional program. Stability in leadership and staff can be important in the success of the partnership

### **Staff Stability**

School partnerships are a multiyear endeavor where Local Writing Project sites invest their expertise in the staff of a particular school. It follows logically that staff stability may be a critical factor affecting partnership outcomes. Almost every time a principal or teacher leaves a partnership school, the partnership's investment in that individual leaves as well. Given principals' role in partnerships, principal turnover would likely have a significant effect on partnership planning and implementation. Teacher turnover would most likely affect partnership outcomes in terms of changes in instructional practice.

**Over half of the partnership schools experienced principal turnover since the study began. New principals, like principals who were at partnerships schools for the study's inception, varied in the extent of their support for the partnerships. All principals required time to determine their support and learn how to manifest it.**

Over the 3 years of the study (2007–08, 2008–09, and 2009–10), the 20 partnership schools experienced considerable principal turnover: 8 schools kept the same principal, 9 had one new principal, and 3 schools had two new principals. All principals require time to understand the partnership and learn the philosophy and approach of the Local Writing Project site. For principals new to their school, the partnership is just one of many aspects of the school setting (e.g., teachers, school programs) with which they have to become familiar. The schools that had two new principals over 3 years were challenging for Local Writing Project sites. In one case, the principal turnover was brought on by accountability sanctions (affecting partnerships in ways that extend beyond principal leadership and so are described separately below). In general, we noted greater stability in the delayed partnership schools. Of the 19 delayed partnership schools, 13 schools kept the same principal and 6 had one new principal in 3 years.

While unstable school leadership (e.g., two principals in 3 years) had a negative effect on schools' ability to form partnerships with Local Writing Project sites, there was less of a clear pattern for schools that had experienced leadership turnover only once during the partnership. For schools that experienced one change in leadership, the change affected partnership development positively, negatively, or not at all. At one school mentioned previously because the principal worked to align partnership professional development with broader school goals, thereby increasing teacher engagement, the principal was new to the school. Most of

the schools were in the middle of the spectrum where the change in principal did not affect the partnership. In one case, several factors contributed to the continuity of the partnership after the turnover, including an apparent alignment between the new principal's priorities and philosophies with those of the Local Writing Project site, stability of the teaching staff, and the school's well-established instructional programs. In another case, principal turnover had a negative effect on the development of the partnership when the new leader served as an interim appointment and followed the district priorities, rather than negotiating for what the school staff needed and wanted, and did not make time for partnership professional development. While these three examples illustrate the range of the effects of principal turnover, most new principals provided passive support for the partnership, leaving it to others (e.g., key district or teacher leaders) to determine the strength of the partnership.

### **Most schools experienced relatively low rates of teacher turnover since the study began.**

The idea of a multiyear partnership is that a Local Writing Project site can work with a school staff over time. Ideally, this extended time frame would allow the Local Writing Project site to begin professional development at whatever point is necessitated by teachers' current instructional practice. The Local Writing Project site could build a coherent professional development program from that entry point, introducing more complex or ambitious ideas for instructional practices over time while providing ongoing supports for implementation. High rates of teacher turnover could wreak havoc with this vision for supporting instructional improvement. First, turnover could mean that teachers whose instruction has been improved through professional development leave the school, thus eliminating the opportunity for those teachers' improved practices to lead to improved student writing at the partnership school and eliminating their ability to share what they've learned with current or new teachers. Additionally, teachers new to the school would not have participated in prior professional development that laid the foundation for current work, impacting their ability to join the staff's collective journey of instructional reform.

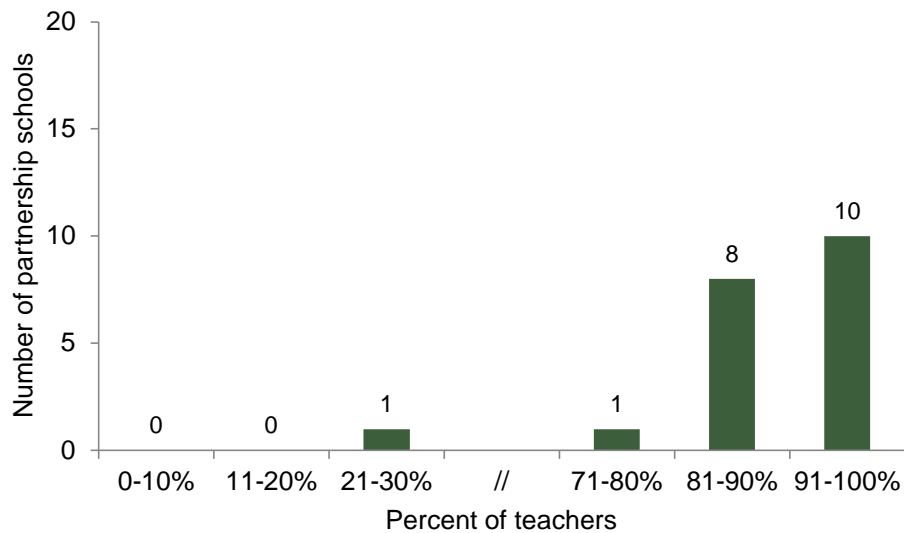
Fortunately, most schools in the study experienced relatively low rates of teacher turnover since the study began with a planning year in 2007–08. Exhibit 2-1 shows that, based on teacher survey data from 2009–10, in half or 10 of the partnership schools, 91% or more of the teachers were at the school for 2 or more years. This means that 91% or more of the teachers were at the school in 2008–09 and 2009–10 and therefore eligible to participate in all partnership professional development.<sup>8</sup> In another 8 schools, 81 to 90% of the teaching staff was at the school for both years of partnership professional development. In one school, however, turnover was high. This school was reconstituted under accountability policies in 2008–09 and again in 2009–10. As a result, less than 30% of teachers in the school during the second year of partnership implementation taught at the school during the first year of partnership professional development.<sup>9</sup> In general, recent teacher turnover appeared slightly higher at the delayed partnership schools than at the partnership schools.

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<sup>8</sup> Of the 19 delayed partnership schools, 90% or more of the teachers were at the school for 2 or more years in 10 schools, 81% to 90% of the teachers were at the school for 2 or more years at 5 schools, 71% to 80% of the teachers were at the school for 2 or more years at 2 schools, 61% to 70% of teachers were at the school for 2 or more years at 1 school, and 41% to 50% of teachers were at the school for 2 or more years in 1 school.

<sup>9</sup> This partnership ended during the second year of implementation (2009–10).

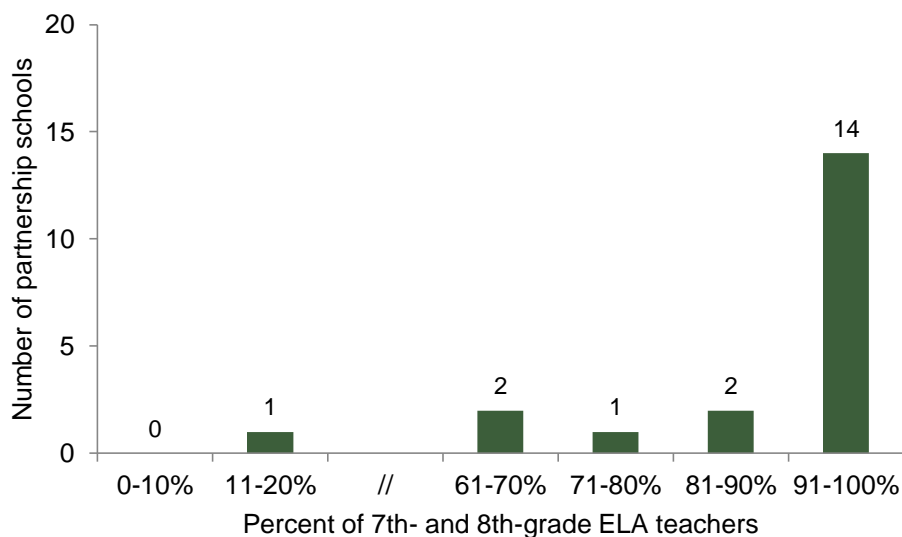
**Exhibit 2-1**  
**Percentage of Teachers at Their Partnership School for 2 or More Years in 2009–10**



Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

Exhibit 2-2 presents data on the stability of seventh- and eighth-grade teachers over the 2 years partnership professional development has been offered at the 20 partnership schools. The exhibit shows that, based on teacher survey data from 2009-10, 91% or more of the seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers at 14 partnership schools were at the school for 2 or more years. This means that at well over half of the partnership schools, 91% or more of the seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers were eligible to participate in all partnership professional development.

**Exhibit 2-2**  
**Percentage of Seventh- and Eighth-Grade ELA Teachers at Their Partnership School for 2 or More Years in 2009–10**



Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

Going into greater detail than expressed in the exhibit above, in 10 of the 14 partnership schools in which 91% or more of the seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers were at the school for 2 or more years, no new teachers joined the ELA department with seventh or eighth grade teaching assignments. In these schools, all of the teachers participating in our more intensive data collection (see Exhibit 1-2) were at the school for both years of professional development.

The effects of a modest influx of new teachers on partnership development and teachers' ability to change their practice may vary depending on the characteristics and instructional practices of new staff. One partnership was not set back by a change in school staff because the teachers involved in the professional development remained at the school. At another school, the principal made sure that new hires were committed to implementing a vision of writing instruction that was aligned with the partnership and participating in partnership professional development. At a school with moderate turnover, some of the teachers who left had not contributed positively to a collegial professional community. One teacher who remained reported feeling that her new team worked well together, with "more sharing, more honest coming together" than had previously existed.

These examples suggest that teacher turnover was not always an aspect of school capacity that was insurmountable for partnership work. In some schools, however, moderate turnover was a problem because partnership leaders were faced with building commitment to and reestablishing a culture of writing with a new set of teachers each year. While the school with the highest turnover rate was extremely hard to partner with, it is impossible to disentangle the effect of teacher turnover from other direct and indirect results of accountability pressures. Nonetheless, it is easy to see how high levels of turnover, at best, required Local Writing Project sites to employ strategies to integrate new teachers in order to maintain a successful partnership. Additionally high turnover might encourage schools to request professional development that could be sustained in the event of teacher turnover.

Having a stable school leadership and teaching staff can facilitate partnership development and instructional reform. Regardless of the stability of the staff, the staff needs time to work together on instruction and needs to use that time effectively. The next section describes the amount of time partnership schools provided for teachers to collaborate and the schools norms for collaboration.

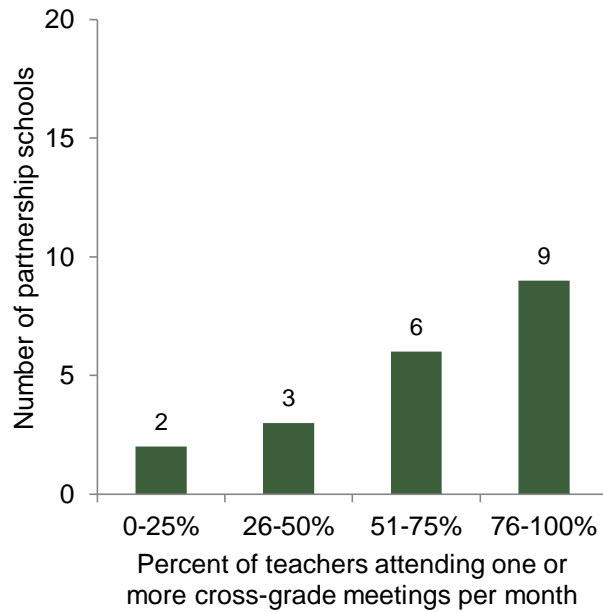
### **Collegiality on Instruction**

A core principle of National Writing Project professional development is that teachers work together and learn from each other. In partnership work, the school becomes the setting for collective work. Two school characteristics influence the capacity for collegial work on instruction: time provided to work together and the norms for collaboration.

**Schools varied in the amount of time they provided for teachers to meet together for instructional purposes. In many schools, teachers had limited time to work together and talk about instruction.**

The amount of time teachers have to work together and share ideas can influence partnership development, and many schools provided limited time for this purpose. The teacher survey asked teachers to describe the frequency (from never to weekly) of cross-grade (i.e., department, whole school) and grade-level meetings. In examining the percentage of teachers who reported attending a cross-grade meeting at least once a month, responses varied widely both across and within schools. In 9 schools, more than three-fourths of teachers reported that they met at least monthly in cross-grade meetings (see Exhibit 2-3), suggesting that this may be a schoolwide practice.

**Exhibit 2-3**  
**Variation Across Partnership Schools in Cross-Grade Meeting Time**

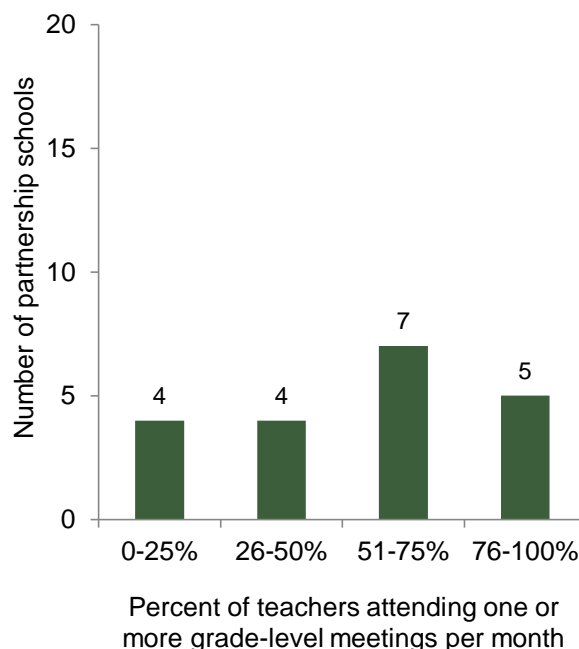


Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

A high level of coordination among teachers working with the same students is a hallmark of middle school education. Exhibit 2-4 shows the percentages of teachers in each partnership school who report attending grade-level meetings at least once a month. At 5 of the 20 partnership schools, over three-quarters of teachers reported meeting at least monthly with their grade-level colleagues. Fewer teachers in the remaining partnership schools reported meeting with their grade-level colleagues this often. These data reveal that many schools provided very little opportunity for teachers to collaborate and so teachers may have had few opportunities to discuss writing instruction.



**Exhibit 2-4**  
**Variation Across Partnership Schools in Grade-Level Meeting Time**



Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

Case study data also show that the amount of time provided for teacher collaboration varied. At one partnership school, teachers had daily collaboration time built into their schedules and they met in either grade-level or vertical teams. Other schools did not provide regular common planning time for their teachers. Interview data also show that administrative tasks or school priorities took up allotted meeting time in some schools. In contrast, in one school that provided weekly collaboration time, the teacher contract prevented the school from providing any direction about whom teachers should collaborate with and the focus of their joint work. In Chapter 6, we discuss how teachers used their collaboration time.

### **Schools’ norms of collaboration around instruction varied.**

A stable staff with time set aside for meeting together may collaborate effectively on instructional matters, a contextual feature that may promote the spread of new instructional strategies. Across partnership schools, the extent to which staff worked well together varied. On the one end of the spectrum were the collaborative teachers at one partnership school who “plan together closely, every day” and reported getting most of their ideas from each other. At another school the assistant principal said, “[Teachers] will actively seek me out to say, ‘Can you get coverage for me [because another teacher] talked about doing [something] in a meeting and I really want to see it in action before I try it.’...Here they really, really look to share the ideas and complement each other well when they go in and do that.” However, a stable staff that has time set aside for collaboration is no guarantee that teachers will work well together. The principal of one partnership school described the relationship among ELA teachers as “hostile” and noted that the hostility influenced how the teachers treated the team from the Local Writing Project site. Teacher-consultants working with another school with a fractured teaching staff that included a few “toxic personalities” found that they had to devote partnership professional development time to team-building activities in order to move the partnership forward.

With the school as the setting for teachers’ collective work on instruction, the schools’ instructional context can influence their capacity to engage in partnership work.

## **Curriculum and Accountability**

Two interrelated aspects of schools' instructional context, curriculum and accountability, affect their capacity to engage in partnership work. For both of these aspects, the objective facts and how actors respond to them influence whether they are positive, neutral, or negative attributes of schools' context as it pertains to partnership development and implementation.

### **Across partnership schools, ELA curriculum varied in the extent to which it served to unify instructional practices within schools and in the degree to which it aligned with Local Writing Project sites' core principles.**

The extent to which ELA teachers' practices in writing instruction were consistent within partnership schools varied across the 20 schools. Within ELA departments in some partnership schools, instructional practices were unified by agreements about curricular materials to use or content to cover (e.g., a focus on a particular genre(s) for each grade). In these cases, Local Writing Project sites could, in a relatively consistent manner, incorporate aspects of the curriculum into their professional development, possibly facilitating implementation. In one partnership, a districtwide initiative to implement Writers' Workshop in ELA classes served to both unify instruction and support the implementation of instructional strategies introduced in partnership professional development. When a consistently implemented curriculum existed, however, it did not always benefit the partnership. In one partnership school, for example, teachers were required to use a relatively scripted ELA curriculum focused on grammar and mechanics. The Local Writing Project site needed to work around that curriculum and its time constraints in order to support teachers to implement strategies introduced through partnership professional development. Many schools did not have a consistent ELA curriculum, so that curriculum did not limit the extent to which teachers could implement ideas from professional development in their classroom. On the other hand, Local Writing Project sites were not able to uniformly weave new instructional practices into an existing instructional program. Chapter 3 describes in more detail how Local Writing Project sites responded to school curriculum (and other contextual issues) in developing their partnerships.

### **External accountability pressure and state testing programs served to either reinforce partnership goals and motivate teachers to participate or to shift the focus away from writing professional development. What mattered was how the site and school responded to the pressure.**

Partnership school academic performance on state standardized tests and the threat of accountability-related sanctions varied.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, across all partnership schools, teachers felt a great deal of pressure to have their students perform well on the state assessments. On the teacher survey, teachers rated the amount of pressure on their school from state assessments on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being no pressure and 7 being a great deal of pressure. On average, staff rated the amount of pressure a 6, the same as in 2008–09.<sup>11</sup>

The implications of this pressure on partnership development and teachers' ability to change their teaching practice seemed to depend on the nature of the state testing system (i.e., how well it aligned with the professional development offered by the Local Writing Project site). Testing drove interest in the professional development in several partnerships. For example, in one partnership where writing played a substantive role

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<sup>10</sup> Across the 20 partnership schools, 4 schools failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP, as defined under the No Child Left Behind Act) for each of the 5 years of our study, 2005–06 through 2009–10) and one school with only 4 years of data failed to meet AYP for each of those 4 years. Seven schools failed to meet AYP for 3 or 4 years. Five schools met AYP all years for which data are reported, including one school that does not yet have data from 2009–10. (Note that not all states have reported final data from 2009–10; we are missing 2009–10 data for three partnership schools. For these schools, we report what is known to date).

<sup>11</sup> There were no differences in the amount of pressure teachers reported in partnership and delayed partnership schools.

on the state's exam, the need to improve student writing on the state assessment drove the focus of the professional development and motivated teachers to participate in the partnership professional development. At this school, teachers were motivated to participate because they wanted to improve student achievement and because they felt increased scrutiny. In another partnership where the state assessment informed the focus of the professional development and motivated teachers to participate, the principal attributed their improved test scores to the partnership work.

When pressures were greater in subjects other than writing, heightened accountability sometimes served to limit partnership work by reducing interest in participation. In some cases, the school's performance on the writing assessment did not present a concern and the school's main focus was on other subjects or special populations. In these cases, teachers participated in the partnership professional development because it was mandatory or because they were interested in improving student achievement. In one partnership school, teachers were initially motivated to participate in partnership professional development when they saw it as a means of preparing them for a new state writing assessment. However, once they no longer felt they needed assistance, some lost interest in the professional development. To form successful partnerships, Local Writing Project sites needed to find a way to make partnership professional development appear relevant to school goals. (Aligning professional development to individual school contexts is discussed in Chapter 3.)

Finally, schools facing the threat of sanctions often have multiple initiatives or interventions aimed at improving student performance and competing for teachers' time and attention. In these cases, participation in partnership professional development was limited if the Local Writing Project site and school leaders had not agreed that improving writing instruction was a key to achieving the school's goals. However, initiatives do not need to compete for teacher attention; they can be prioritized and integrated and, in some cases, the partnership goals can be incorporated into the school's broader goals. For example, in one school, a principal worked to make sense of multiple initiatives and integrate partnership professional development into the school plans. In this case, the school and Local Writing Project site were able to leverage the school's accountability pressure and position the partnership professional development as a means for teachers to reach their goals.

## **Conclusion**

By definition, partnerships are collaborative ventures between a Local Writing Project site and school, and the context and capacity of each affects their joint work. Where the partners negotiated their work together, and leveraged their strengths, they were able to plan and organize the partnership work, provide contextually relevant professional development, and support teachers in the implementation of new strategies despite limitations in either partner's capacity or challenging school circumstances. How these organizations came together through the planning process is the subject of the next chapter.



## Chapter 3. Partnership Planning

Planning sets the stage for the partnership work that will take place. In a partnership, both partners, the Local Writing Project site and the school, co-design a plan for their work together. Through the planning process, they develop a shared understanding of the goals for the partnership and the strategies for reaching them. The plans may outline the frequency and dates of professional development, the target participants, and the format and content of the professional development. Ultimately, the goal of planning is to create a strategy for the delivery of coherent and relevant professional development to a critical mass of teachers. It should result in a shared vision between the school and Local Writing Project site for the basic structure of the partnership work. The plan should be flexible enough to adapt to changing school contexts and needs.

Schools and Local Writing Project sites varied in their approaches to planning and the extent to which they were able to co-design such plans. As the previous chapter indicated, the capacity of both the site and the school influenced the planning processes. Partnerships in which (1) key stakeholders had time to work together and the resources to support professional development and (2) partners were able to diagnose and respond to school context, balance school goals with site capacity and expertise, and consider prior and future professional development were more likely to involve teachers in high quality, in-depth professional development that was tailored to the school context and teacher needs. This chapter discusses the planning processes across study partnerships and notes where naturally occurring partnerships had similar or different processes.

### **Enabling Partnership Planning: Involvement of Key Stakeholders and the Provision of Time and Resources**

Bringing together people with the necessary authority, expertise, and commitment to plan the partnership is an essential first step in the co-design process. Depending on the nature of the partnership, key stakeholders can include school or district leaders and teachers who have the authority to make decisions about the partnership plan and set aside time and resources for it. Providing time for key stakeholders from the school and Local Writing Project site to come together for the purpose of partnership planning is an essential next step of process. Formal meeting time not only provides a forum for joint decisionmaking; it also can signal the importance of the work. This section describes the variation across partnerships in who was involved in the planning process and how time and resources were allotted for it.

**Across the partnerships, the involvement of key stakeholders impacted the partners' ability to plan appropriate professional development and secure necessary resources. Local Writing Project sites and schools varied in terms of how strategic they were about who they involved in planning.**

The effectiveness of partnership planning was influenced by who was involved in the process. As discussed in Chapter 2, having a “champion” who supports the partnership is an important dimension of school capacity to partner. In many cases, the support of school or district leaders was crucial to the planning process, as they provided the time, resources, and authority for planning to happen and signaled to teachers the importance of the work. Likewise, involving teachers in the planning process helped Local Writing Project leaders and teacher-consultants gain credibility with the school faculty. As the previous chapter indicated, some Local Writing Project sites were intentional about trying to build relationships with potential partnership leaders. Across the study partnerships, however, the partners varied in the extent to which they were able to involve key stakeholders in the planning process. See Exhibit 3-1 for the range across partnerships in who was involved in planning.

### Exhibit 3-1 Involvement of Key Stakeholders in Planning Meetings

	No administrators or teachers	Administrators <u>or</u> some teachers	Administrators <u>and</u> some teachers	Administrators <u>and</u> some teachers (in leadership roles)
<b>Number of Partnership Schools</b>	1	9	6	4

Source: SRI analysis of 2009-10 interviews and quarterly partnership monitoring.

Prior research suggests that school leaders' advocacy for reforms is necessary for legitimizing them in the eyes of teachers and enabling reforms to take hold (Weinbaum & Supovitz, 2010). Our research also indicates that the partnerships in which district or school administrators valued the partnership work were more likely to implement aligned and relevant professional development. Some Local Writing Project leaders were particularly strategic about involving and informing these key stakeholders. For example, one Local Writing Project site understood early on that it needed to involve a district instructional coach in order to gain access to teachers. The site director commented: "What happened...was I quickly realized when I went in during the initial planning year that we needed to work with [the district coach]. She had worked very hard to gain the trust of these teachers so if we didn't work with her we were in trouble."

In planning study partnerships, school/district leader support ranged from district administrators and principals heavily involved to passive administrator support to very limited or no leader support. As an example of strong administrator involvement in planning, one partnership had a district assistant superintendent who led the relationship management from the school/district side and worked with the site director to develop the vision for the partnership professional development. In a case where principal support went from passive to active, the leader became more involved when he learned from the teacher-consultants that the assistant principal he had put in charge of the partnership was not following through on plans, such as notifying teachers of professional development events over the summer. At this time, the principal made it clear that the partnership was part of the assistant principal's job and would be included in her evaluation. Since then, the planning meetings and follow through improved. A teacher-consultant described the change: "That has been biggest blessing...because we needed a person on site who could do daily stuff and she did... She did a 180: [she was] not only supportive but [a] cheerleader and leader." In other cases where leader involvement in planning was most limited, principals were too busy with other priorities or not interested enough to participate.

Across study partnerships, deliberate efforts were made to involve teachers in formal planning meetings. Involving teachers, such as through planning committees, is a strategy aimed at planning relevant professional development and ensuring teacher commitment to and participation in the professional development activities. In cases where teachers participated in planning meetings, the Local Writing Project sites or school/district administrators intentionally identified a teacher or group of teachers to help plan the work. For example, at the request of the Local Writing Project site, a school formed a planning committee comprised of an instructional coach, a department chair, and three teachers, one representing each grade level, to meet with the teacher-consultants to plan the partnership work. The Local Writing Project site director explained her rationale: "We have always used a core group [of teachers] in planning for the year, to understand what we can do to make this a better experience for all of the teachers...I think it's very important to define a role that they would be involved in." This partnership was able to recruit high percentages of teachers from the ELA department and the school as a whole to participate in substantial amounts of professional development.

Further, evidence suggests that involving teachers helped overcome weak or passive administrator support. In the case described above, the school-based committee had the passive support of the principal and was able to plan a coherent, multiyear program, a plan that likely would not have materialized had the school not involved the teacher committee. This example demonstrates that a strong teacher core involved in planning,

combined with a leader who did not create barriers, can lead to a plan that engages large proportions of a school faculty in intensive professional development. In another case in which a partnership positioned a department chair as a partnership leader, the strategy improved teachers' sense that they could tailor the professional development to meet their needs. The teacher leader reported, "[I]t hasn't felt like 'we're telling you that you've been doing it wrong and now you're going to be doing it right.' It's really turned into an opportunity for, 'if you have the questions, then maybe we can together sort out the answer and I happen to have some expertise in this'...It's really turned into more of a partnership than 'this is the project and we're going to tell you what to do.'" Recruiting this teacher for this leadership position, as well as for the ISI, increased her own commitment to the partnership work. Like the example above, compared to other partnerships, this partnership had a high proportion of both ELA teachers and all staff receiving significant amounts of professional development.

Even where teachers did not participate in formal planning meetings, in most study partnerships teachers were able to help plan by providing feedback on an ongoing basis during or after professional development events. Some Local Writing Project sites used exit slips at the end of each professional development session or surveyed teachers on their professional development preferences in order to plan professional development that covered the content and format requested by teachers. In one partnership, the teacher-consultants were given some time at grade-level meetings at the end of the 2009–10 school year. In each meeting, the teacher-consultants had teachers fill out a needs assessment form in which they wrote down what they wanted from the planned summer professional development. Across the partnerships, teachers reported appreciating the opportunity to provide input, and it often led to a greater commitment to the work.

Although in most cases naturally occurring partnerships differed from study schools because they initiated the partnership with the Local Writing Project site, like study partnerships they also varied in the extent of leader and teacher involvement in planning. The majority of naturally occurring partnerships in our sample were instigated by the principals or district administrators, but the impetus for the partnerships varied. Some administrators wanted more supports for their teachers to raise test scores or improve writing instruction in general, while others had positive experiences with the Local Writing Project site at their previous schools and brought it with them to their new assignments. In some cases, the principals brought in the Local Writing Project site at the request of teachers who had prior relationships or experiences with the Local Writing Project site. In contrast, in two naturally occurring partnerships, the Local Writing Project site directors approached the schools to partner with them, which is similar to how partnership schools in our study began. In all of these naturally occurring cases, after initiation, the level of administrator involvement ranged from those who were actively involved in planning, to those who supported the partnership but delegated responsibility to another staff member (e.g., an assistant principal, instructional coach, or department chair), to those who let teachers plan and manage the partnership.

The involvement of key stakeholders in the planning process helped ensure that partners had the capacity and commitment to develop plans that met school or district needs and that they had the necessary time and resources to do so.

### **Most partners used formal planning time to jointly develop partnership goals and a professional development framework.**

At the most basic level, the ability to jointly plan partnerships depended on allocating time for partners to come together. Formal planning through scheduled meetings provided common space for the Local Writing Project site and school to determine what they hoped to accomplish through the professional development and to establish a basic structure for the work. To plan professional development for 2009–10, study partners typically held one formal meeting at the end of the 2008–09 school year or at the beginning of the 2009–10 school year. Most partnerships did not meet again formally during the year, in some cases because the professional development was on the right track and informal mechanisms were enough to keep it moving forward. Some partners, including several whose plans resulted in high-quality professional development, continued to schedule a few formal planning meetings during the year as a touchstone or to redirect the plan

as necessary. Exhibit 3-2 illustrates that variation in the use of formal planning meetings across study partnerships.

**Exhibit 3-2**  
**Incidence of Formal Planning Meetings**

	No formal planning meetings	Formal meeting time provided but superseded or not well used	Productive formal planning meetings at start of year	Productive formal planning meetings throughout year
<b>Number of Partnership Schools</b>	2	6	6	6

Source: SRI analysis of 2009-10 interviews and quarterly partnership monitoring.

In a few cases, school leaders did not provide time for formal planning meetings, often because of competing demands on people's time. When school leaders did not prioritize time for planning meetings, it indicated a lack of commitment to the partnership work. One school was under significant accountability pressure and, as a result, was implementing multiple school improvement initiatives at the same time. Based on spring 2009 meetings, the teacher-consultants developed an outline for the partnership work for 2009–10. By August, the teacher-consultants learned that significant teacher turnover required revising the plan. However, they were unable to schedule a meeting with the principal to rework the plan. At another school, the Local Writing Project site had difficulty engaging the principal in planning discussions. The principal was new to the school and had no personal commitment to the work; the school had been reconstituted and was under such severe accountability pressures that he eventually called for an end to the partnership due to competing priorities.

Although having time was a precondition for joint planning to happen, more important was the quality of how that time was used. Most study partnerships were able to effectively utilize the time that was made available to them (their strategies for doing so are described in the next part of this chapter). In one case (involving two partnerships), however, school leaders set aside time but the Local Writing Project site was unable to take advantage of it. The district convened two meetings in fall 2009 with Local Writing Project site leaders and school staff to establish a steering committee and plan the professional development for the year. District and school staff were disappointed in the Local Writing Project site's approach to planning. A district administrator explained how the time was not used productively:

I [expected] more of strategic planning where there's follow-up or a beginning, a middle, and an end to what we're going to do instead of just "ok, we haven't met in a while, let's talk about sketching down what do you want, let's pull it together, here it is," and boom, it's gone until we think about it the next time.

The results of this failed planning process were one 30-minute professional development session for one partnership school and one 15-minute professional development session for the other partnership school.

In addition to time, planning was also affected by the resources available for the professional development. The amount schools or districts were willing to contribute for the partnership work, on top of the grant funds, influenced how much professional development partnerships could plan for.

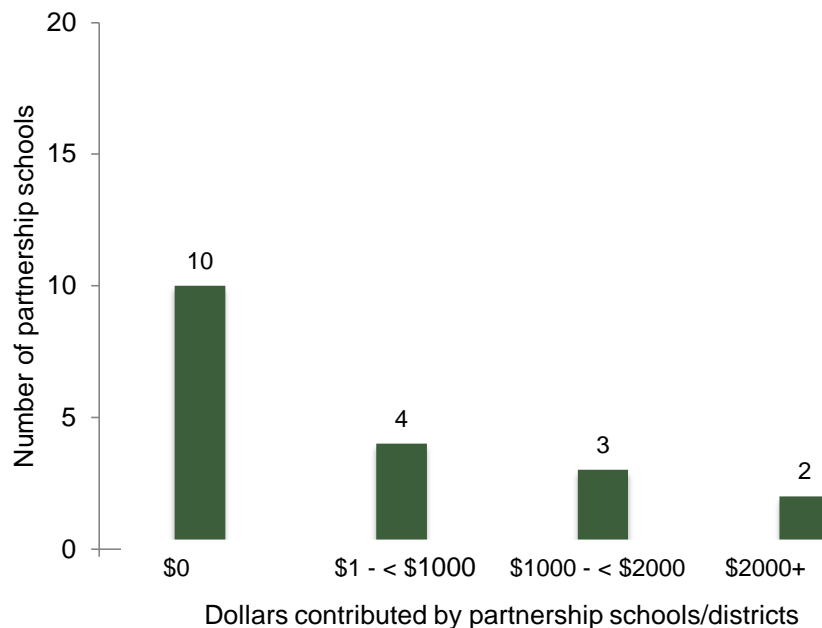
### **Although the amount of monetary resources that schools contributed to the partnerships varied, half of the schools provided no financial support.**

As partners, schools are expected to "co-resource" the study partnership to demonstrate their commitment and intent to form a partnership. However, in many cases, the grant funds (\$12,000 per year for 4 years) provided a safety net and served to decrease or eliminate pressure on schools to contribute. Indeed, some Local Writing Project site directors voiced concern that some schools participated just to receive the professional development funding, implying that the schools had no



intention of establishing a co-funded partnership. As a result, few schools provided substantial funds for the partnership work (see Exhibit 3-3). Half of the schools contributed no funding at all, and only two provided more than \$2,000. This distribution is similar to contributions made in 2008–09.

**Exhibit 3-3**  
**School/District Financial Support for Partnership Work**



Source: 2009–10 quarterly partnership monitoring.

Note: One school is not included in this count because the data the Local Writing Project site provided through the quarterly partnership monitoring process was deemed unreliable. (See Appendix A for more on quarterly partnership monitoring and our data verification process.)

Of those schools that provided funds, contributions ranged from \$100 to more than \$8,500. The two schools at the high end of the distribution covered the costs of stipends for professional development participants. In one case, the district paid \$34 per hour or inservice credits for the time teachers spent in partnership professional development. Across all contributing schools, paying for substitute teachers was the most frequently covered cost. Resources were also spent on materials for teachers and students (e.g., books, journals) and printing and copying. One school paid for travel costs to national and regional events.

For three schools, their contribution of funds increased from 2008–09, indicating increased commitment to the partnership work. One of the schools paid nothing in 2008–09 but in 2009–10 contributed more than \$1,000, and another increased its contribution from just less than \$2,500 in 2008–09 to more than \$3,250 in 2009–10. In the third case, the increase in funds from less than \$100 to more than \$1,000 marked a significant change in attitude at the school. At this school in 2008–09, the principal was still grappling with the idea that the school did not receive the grant funds directly and felt the school should not contribute anything. The increased funding from the school signaled a growing dedication to the partnership. The teacher-consultant said, “I think the biggest change that I’ve seen is that the school is picking up more of the responsibility.” The school paid for substitutes to release social studies and science teachers for a full-day scoring and norming session with the teacher-consultants for the state writing assessment. It also paid for materials for teachers and students and was planning to contribute \$1,000 for a summer student writing camp.

Many of the schools that did not contribute in 2009–10 had funded at least part of the partnership work in 2008–09. The contributions of these schools in 2008–09 ranged dramatically from \$12 for printing and copying to more than \$9,000 for an inservice program. In some cases, the contribution was so small in 2008–

09 that the difference in 2009–10 was negligible and did not affect the professional development plans. In other cases, though, the difference was reflected in very different professional development plans from the previous year. In the case of two schools that paid for inservice programs in 2008–09, the Local Writing Project site and school could not agree on a plan for 2009–10 and very little professional development was provided. In this and other cases, the schools did not provide any funding because the grant funds were ample to support the partnership professional development.

Several study partnerships provided evidence for how the allocation of resources influenced the professional development plans. For one partnership, the reallocation of funds from 2008–09 to 2009–10 allowed for a shift in the design of the professional development from a string of afterschool workshop to more integrated professional development that reached more teachers. This change came about as a result of new leadership who wanted to incorporate partnership professional development into the goals and initiatives at the school and made staff meeting time available during the contract day for partnership professional development. Teacher-consultants working with other partnerships lamented how the lack of resources prevented them from offering more professional development. One teacher-consultant felt that changing teachers' practice required classroom-based support, but she could not spend that kind of time at the school due to resource constraints. Another partnership decided to use a large proportion of their resources to send two teachers to a week-long summer workshop, and the teacher-consultant noted that they could have reached more teachers if the school provided financial support. Within the limits of the study funding, and without additional contributions from schools, partnerships had to prioritize elements of professional development to implement.

In contrast, naturally occurring partnerships did not have a set amount of funding specifically for partnership work. Rather, with the exception of one school that was supported by a Local Writing Project site-initiated grant, they had to find funds to support the partnership work. In most cases, they allocated federal grants or general professional development funds toward this work, consciously choosing partnership professional development over other possibilities. The amount the schools could pay varied (reaching as much as \$72,000 per year in one case) and directly affected the type of professional development they received. For example, one school that used its district professional development funds could only afford to have the teacher-consultant at the school 1 day per week instead of the Local Writing Project site's recommended 2 days per week.

Overall, the willingness of schools to contribute funds signaled their commitment to the partnership work. Other schools may have been committed to the work but were limited in their abilities to contribute resources or felt the study stipend was enough to cover the professional development they wanted. In general, the contribution of resources influenced the kind of professional development plan the partners could develop.

## **Plan Development**

By the beginning of the 2009–10 school year, nearly all study partnerships had plans in place. Unlike 2008–09 in which many partners developed plans over the course of the year, partners in 2009–10 used their experience from the prior year to solidify a plan earlier. The Local Writing Project sites and schools had a general sense of what the professional development would look like, often keeping or building upon the structure from the previous year, and many of the actors were more comfortable working together by the third year of the study. And as the previous chapter discussed, partners' visions for partnership work evolved so that they better conceived how partnerships might develop over time. Only two study partnerships had no plans in place, which stemmed from an inability of the partners to agree on a direction for the work. Three other study partnerships had minimal plans in place, due to conflicting priorities between the school or district and the Local Writing Project site. For example, in one partnership there was a divide between what the site director envisioned for the plan (including releasing teachers to participate in professional development) and pressures the principal felt from the district to keep teachers in their classrooms. By fall 2009, the parties had only agreed to tentative dates for the year's professional development. In examining the

relationship between planning and the delivery of professional development, we found, not surprisingly, that the partnerships with minimal or no partnership plans were among the partnerships with the lowest proportion of teachers participating in professional development.

Across the study partnerships with plans, the quality of plans hinged on whether the partners were able to carefully diagnose and respond to school context, balance school goals with site capacity and expertise, and consider prior and future partnership professional development. That is, did they engage in a planning process that enabled them to develop *coherent* professional development as defined in the literature (Desimone, 2009)?<sup>12</sup> This section describes the partners' efforts in these areas.

**Partnership planning was facilitated by Local Writing Project site knowledge of school context. Site leaders and teacher-consultants learned about school context and teacher needs through staff feedback; history in the school, district, or state; prior relationships; and time spent at the school.**

Although Local Writing Project sites often had a framework for the professional development they provided to schools, site directors who took into account school context were able to design relevant partnership professional development. As evidenced above, having key stakeholders, including school or district leaders and teachers, involved in the planning process supported the development of plans that met school needs. Local Writing Project leaders and teacher-consultants also drew upon their knowledge of the school structure and relationships, curriculum, accountability requirements, and other state and district policies, as well as on observations and interactions with school leaders and teachers.

Evidence suggests that understanding teacher needs enables Local Writing Project sites to provide relevant professional development that teachers want to attend. As described earlier, teacher-consultants often had structures in place to receive teacher feedback, such as exit slips or feedback forms after each professional development session or needs assessment forms or surveys at the beginning or end of the school year to identify teacher interests and needs. Teacher-consultants also learned about teacher needs through impromptu conversations during or after the professional development or through e-mails. One study partnership provided an example of how soliciting and responding to teacher feedback improved the partnership work. In this case, teachers did not necessarily believe they needed writing professional development. The teacher-consultants asked teachers to provide a substantial amount of feedback on each professional development session. Receiving this feedback enabled the teacher-consultants to design professional development that the teachers perceived to meet their needs and, as a result, established the teacher-consultants' credibility with the teachers. In other cases, teacher-consultants observed specific school needs in the course of their work together. In one school, Local Writing Project leaders observed significant problems associated with a fragmented ELA department and designed professional development to address teacher collaboration.

Local Writing Project sites that entered partnerships with experience in the district or prior history of relationships with the schools, as was the case with most of the naturally occurring partnerships and a few study partnerships, had the benefit of institutional knowledge and/or rapport with the staff. At the same time, school leaders were already familiar with the Local Writing Project sites and what they could offer their schools. Thus, adaptation was easier on both ends. For example, at one study partnership, the teacher-consultants had worked with the school before in a different capacity and had deep knowledge of the school, district, and state contexts (e.g., school structure, departmental relationships, curriculum, and district and state assessments). Drawing on their background knowledge, the teacher-consultants came in with a partnership framework but then adjusted it to the school's needs and goals while considering state and district

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<sup>12</sup> As noted in the evaluation framework (Exhibit 1-1), research on professional development identifies coherence as a key dimension of quality. Coherence is defined in terms of alignment with a teacher's knowledge and beliefs and with school, district, and state reforms and policies. In Chapter 5, we consider the extent to which partnership professional development was coherent.

requirements. An administrator shared how the teacher-consultants used their knowledge of the school and teachers to develop a professional development model that fit the school:

[The teacher-consultants] are open to not going by a specific model and [they are] able to create a model that is for our school, that meshes with our teachers' styles. They have a good feeling of how our teachers are teaching and what would be beneficial for our kids. Having that background knowledge of what our school is like and what would be beneficial for our kids...All that comes together. [They] are aware of what I feel is important and aware of the standard course of study, aware of what makes our teachers tick. They design the professional development based on our school.

In addition, a teacher said that the school's prior relationship with the teacher-consultants made teachers feel more comfortable providing feedback: "We had the opportunity with the relationship to ask for what we wanted more of so they could adjust the program to include things we were asking for."

Finally, teacher-consultants in several study partnerships used their knowledge of state and district policies and initiatives to design professional development. For example, in several instances, the teacher-consultants included scoring sessions for district or state assessments in the professional development plan. For schools that felt accountability pressures—a contextual factor that sometimes inhibited partnership development—this was a deliberate effort on the part of teacher-consultants to gain credibility with the teachers and provide relevant professional development. In at least one study partnership, focusing on the state writing assessment enabled the teacher-consultants to work with initially resistant teachers and opened the door for them to plan other writing professional development. In other cases, Local Writing Project leaders observed changes in the organization of ELA instruction (e.g., switching from a single ELA class to separate reading and writing classes) or the salience of new professional learning communities (PLCs) or Response to Intervention (RtI) programs and sought to design professional development to support or connect to these initiatives.

Partnerships that took into account school context in the development of the professional development were among the partnerships with higher proportions of teachers participating in the professional development. In these partnerships, teachers were more interested in what was being offered or school leaders were more likely to feel it was important for their staff to attend.

**Partners negotiated school goals with Local Writing Project site capacity and expertise, with several finding more balance over time.**

In developing plans, partners had to weigh school goals and teacher needs, particularly related to curriculum and accountability, with Local Writing Project site capacity, expertise, and core principles. Some Local Writing Projects had explicit frameworks for engaging schools in this work (see Exhibit 3-4 for an example).

### Exhibit 3-4

#### A Local Writing Project's Framework for Diagnosing and Responding to School Context

One Local Writing Project's process for diagnosing and responding to the school context includes three phases. The first phase involves representatives from the Local Writing Project site (site leaders and lead teacher-consultants) engaging stakeholders at the school/district in a discussion of what they want and sharing notes from the meeting(s) with the school/district to confirm their understanding of school needs. Informally during this first phase, teacher-consultants talk with the teacher colleagues to assess their needs and interests. Second, the lead teacher-consultants meet with the Local Writing Project site leaders to reflect, problem solve, plan next steps, and cross-check their process to make sure enough stakeholders have been involved. Through this process the teacher-consultants develop a proposal to take back to the school/district that reflects what the person with positional authority (typically the principal or a district leader) wants as well as what the teachers want. Third, the lead teacher-consultants present their proposal to the school/district and negotiate to finalize the partnership plan. Developing and refining this process took time. And, the Local Writing Project site director noted that the process is one reason partnerships are "so time consuming."

Across the partnerships, the amount of negotiation required varied. In some cases, aligning school goals, site perceptions of teachers' needs, and site expertise involved fairly minor negotiation and adjustment. In one case, a Local Writing Project site tried to balance what the teachers asked for with what the teacher-consultants diagnosed as their real areas for growth and what the site was able to offer. In this case, the teacher-consultants included content that they felt the teachers needed, such as more general writing skills, even if teachers had not specifically asked for it. As a teacher-consultant explained, they looked at the expertise and resources they have available and what teachers needed and discussed "how do we get from here to here to meet the needs that they have."

In other cases, school goals were not well aligned with what Local Writing Projects had to offer. In the case of one study partnership, the school administration felt a new schoolwide reading program fit better with their goals and more professional development time was given to that program than to partnership work. In another study partnership, though, the mismatch led to a long negotiation process between the district and Local Writing Project site leaders that eventually resulted in a professional development plan that met district needs and goals while maintaining the integrity of the Local Writing Project site's core principles. The partners initially experienced some tension in designing the professional development as the interests of the district and teachers did not necessarily reflect the approach of the Local Writing Project site. For example, the district wanted to work with the Local Writing Project site to develop concrete materials, such as a curriculum binder that identified learning objectives, that would be maintained in the event of teacher turnover. The Local Writing Project site, on the other hand, typically focused on building the skills and understanding of individual teachers. Further, according to a teacher-consultant, the Local Writing Project site was opposed to teachers' requests to be "spoon[fe]d" strategies." Finally, the partners also had to connect the district's main professional development initiative with the partnership professional development, despite the fact that some viewed the philosophies as contradictory. The district initiative focuses on assessment and creating clear, quantifiable goals while the Local Writing Project work centers on authentic experiences. Some teachers found balancing these approaches in developing their curriculum difficult or time consuming. The negotiation process was iterative and took into consideration multiple stakeholder interests (the framework for the negotiation process is described in Exhibit 3-4). In this case, the school administrators and teachers had strong opinions about their needs and what they hoped to achieve from the partnership, and they felt comfortable advocating for a plan that met their goals. In the end, this partnership had all of the ELA teachers voluntarily participate in the professional development and increased the participation of non-ELA teachers.

In many study partnerships, the school and site influence became more balanced over time. In these cases, as the Local Writing Project site and school leaders got to know each other more and learned to work with each

other, they became more capable of co-designing the professional development plan. For example, one school's faculty played a larger role in crafting the professional development plan once the teachers were more comfortable with the Local Writing Project site and could better recognize their students' writing needs. When the ELA teachers and the teacher-consultant sat down to plan before the start of the school year, one teacher mentioned that she would like help working with students to draft more compelling introductions, and writing introductions became the topic of the very first demonstration that the teacher-consultant did in her class. However, in shaping the specific content of the professional development, the teachers relied on the expertise of the teacher-consultant and the Local Writing Project site. For example, the teachers were interested in exploring the connection between reading and writing, and the teacher-consultant made the decision to introduce literature circles because it was a method that the teacher-consultant had used extensively in her own classroom. Exhibit 3-5 shows the distribution of study partnerships in terms of both site leaders' knowledge of the school context and the extent to which development of the partnerships involved negotiation and adaptation.

**Exhibit 3-5**  
**Use of Context and Negotiation in Planning**

	Limited knowledge of school needs or site capacity, and no process for adaptation	Some knowledge of school needs and/or site capacity, but adaptation efforts fail or are one-sided	Knowledge of school needs and site capacity but may be limited; adaptation considers all available information	Sufficient knowledge of school needs and site capacity; adaptation considers all available information
<b>Number of Partnership Schools</b>	4	7	3	6

Source: SRI analysis of 2009-10 interviews and quarterly partnership monitoring.

Fortunately, all of the adaptation and negotiation seems to pay off. Those partnerships that achieved the greatest balance between school goals and site expertise and capacity crafted plans for professional development that teachers were motivated to attend, with many of these partnerships among those with the highest proportion of ELA teacher participants. Overall, we observed that partnership goals that aligned with schoolwide goals (e.g., as articulated in school improvement plans) had greater potential to become embedded into the fabric of the school. One study partnership intentionally aligned its partnership goals with the school improvement plan for 2009–10, which was a shift from the 2008–09 school year. In 2008–09, teachers were given a menu of workshops from which to select five by consensus, but there was no overarching goal for the work and these workshops were not coherent or meaningful for many teachers. For 2009–10, the principal, writing committee, and site director met to develop writing goals linked to schoolwide goals and to build partnership professional development around them. This was a deliberate effort to gain teacher buy-in. As a teacher explained, “Everyone’s just so overwhelmed that if we approach [writing professional development] as, ‘hey, this is a new thing, let’s train and learn it,’ I think there’s going to be a lot of shut-down. But if it’s incorporated into the schools goals, as ‘this is something we are [already] doing,’ we’re more likely to get buy-in.” It was also a move to establish the partnership within the school. The principal shared, “I think the hope is that with the model we’re doing in the building, the [Local Writing Project] has become part of that model... We’ll get as much information and training and process set up as we can, so it will already be ingrained in the building when we don’t have funding anymore.” Teacher-consultants from another Local Writing Project site also saw the school improvement plan as the key to sustaining the work. The teacher-consultants were hoping the school incorporated writing into its school improvement plan for 2010–11 for this purpose. Embedding partnership work into the school improvement plan could also facilitate implementing coherent professional development over time.

**Partnership plans that were designed to build from event to event or from year to year led to professional development that was more coherent for teachers.**

Developing a plan for a partnership is different from planning isolated events that may or may not connect or continuing the same plan from the prior year without adjusting for any changes or prior experience. A partnership plan changes over time and builds on prior professional development. One site director said they “don’t operate on the workshop level but on the series level [and we] conceptualize a series of events” for the professional development. Continuity and coherence can help ensure teachers are engaged over the course of the professional development. In 2009–10, there was variation in the extent to which partners were intentional about creating plans that were coherent across events and/or years (see Exhibit 3-6).

**Exhibit 3-6**  
**Level of Coherence in Partnership Plans**

	No coherence (isolated events)	Efforts to build coherence not effective	Coherence in content	Multiyear framework
<b>Number of Partnership Schools</b>	8	4	6	2

Source: SRI analysis of 2009-10 interviews and quarterly partnership monitoring.

During formal planning meetings, the partners typically developed a plan for the entire year in which the professional development could build over the course of the year. Some professional development formats lent themselves to more continuity from event to event. Afterschool courses, for example, enabled partnerships to make connections across the entire course. A fairly typical approach to afterschool courses involved having participants read about strategies and then having a teacher-consultant demonstrate those strategies in the course. Teachers were expected to try the strategies in their classrooms that week and bring student work results to discuss when the class reconvened the following week.

Some teacher-consultants attempted to build event-to-event coherence by using teacher feedback at the end of each professional development event to inform the next event, though they varied in their ability to use that feedback effectively. For example, in one study partnership, at the end of each professional development event, the teachers filled out an evaluation form and answered the questions “What do you want more of? What did we not cover? What do you need?” and then, the teacher-consultant explained, “We will come back together within a week and say, ‘Okay, here’s what they need and then go to research like crazy...and then put together an agenda.’”

Only one Local Writing Project site had a multiyear framework for the study partnership at the outset. The plan in 2008–09 focused on giving teachers a base in Readers’ and Writers’ Workshops. With that foundation, in 2009–10, the Local Writing Project site worked with participating teachers on action research projects to provide teachers with the opportunity to reflect on and determine what works in their own teaching. The plan for 2010–11 was to branch out to other content areas and use the initial cadre of teachers as coaches. In order to increase the amount of writing occurring across the school, the plan included a summer writing academy for content area teachers along with yearlong follow-up. In contrast, most study partnerships planned one year at a time, often deliberately so they could reflect on their progress and the school context every year. Naturally occurring partnerships often reevaluated their professional development plans each year, taking into consideration available resources.

Partnerships that were intentional about making professional development coherent from event to event or from year to year had high participation rates, either for ELA teachers or for the whole staff. Most of the partnerships with little coherence over time had among the lowest participation rates.

**Differentiating the professional development and establishing multiple points of entry for teachers seeking different levels of involvement and for teachers from different content areas were strategies that helped to ensure relevance and motivate teacher participation.**

Planning for differentiated professional development for different types of teachers (e.g., math vs. ELA), for teachers starting work at different points in time (e.g., incorporating new cohorts of teachers), and for teachers seeking different levels of involvement were approaches to ensure relevance and coherence. In some cases, differentiation was also a strategy for sustainability—by integrating new teachers in the event of turnover and developing teacher leaders through the professional development. Exhibit 3-7 shows the range in the use of differentiation as a strategy by study partnerships.

**Exhibit 3-7  
Incidence of Differentiation in Plans**

	No differentiation	Evidence of efforts to differentiate plan (may be result of participation changes)	Differentiation for different types of teachers and attempts to account for past and future professional development	Differentiation for different types of teachers and accounting for past and future professional development
<b>Number of Partnership Schools</b>	6	7	4	3

Source: SRI analysis of 2009-10 interviews and quarterly partnership monitoring.

One study partnership planned differentiated professional development based on teachers' prior experience, with attention to building teacher capacity to lead writing professional development in the future. The partnership had two cohorts of teachers—those that participated in a school-based institute in 2008–09 and those that began in 2009–10. The professional development plan for the second cohort was modeled after the professional development the first cohort received in 2008–09. Meanwhile, participants in the first cohort were being groomed to be teacher leaders and help others integrate writing into their instruction. In addition to differentiating by participation years, the teacher-consultants also attempted to differentiate by content area. Realizing that they were not reaching math teachers through the school-based institutes, the teacher-consultants hosted a demonstration day just for math teachers as a means of involving them in the professional development. In another example, a study partnership differentiated the professional development for teachers with different levels of experience and for different content areas in order to engage new participants and to leverage the knowledge of returning participants. The teacher-consultant noted that the plan honored “the really advanced people” but was “accessible for people who have never done it before.”

The need to differentiate varied depending on the partnership goals for participation. Assuming little to no teacher turnover, partnerships that targeted the ELA department did not need to plan differentiated professional development for teachers from different departments. Likewise, partnerships that served the same teachers every year did not need to plan multiple points of entry.

## Conclusion

Involving key stakeholders and setting aside time for them to sit down together to plan professional development are fundamental first steps in partnership work. If the partnerships have buy-in from key stakeholders and provide time for the work, the site is able to offer professional development. If the partners are able to diagnose and respond to school context, including curriculum, teacher collegiality, and accountability requirements; negotiate and balance school goals and teacher needs with site capacity and



expertise; and consider prior and future partnership professional development, the partnership can offer professional development that teachers want to attend. These strategies are key to ensuring that partnership professional development is tailored to school and district context, meets the needs of the targeted teachers to ensure active teacher engagement, and allows teachers to reflect upon and improve their practice and build a sense of community. In many cases, partnerships that implemented these elements of planning had a significant number of teachers participating in the professional development that came out of it. Participation rates and the nature of the professional development that was offered as a result of these planning processes are described in Chapters 4 and 5.



## Chapter 4. Participation in Writing Professional Development

As the preceding chapters describe, Local Writing Project sites, schools, and planning processes varied substantially across the study partnerships. The next two chapters describe the results of this variation as seen in the partnership professional development. As noted in our discussion of the evaluation framework (Exhibit 1-1), recent research has shown that there are five common features found in high-quality professional development: content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation (Desimone, 2009). This chapter describes participation in professional development with a focus on two of the five characteristics of high-quality professional development: collective participation and duration.

According to Desimone (2009), collective participation of teachers from the same school, grade, or department can set up opportunities for these teachers to develop a common language and set of skills and knowledge that they can share with each other and build upon through future. In terms of duration, there is no consensus on the amount of professional development that teachers must have to change their practice. While single workshops are typically ineffective, professional development that is longer duration may change teacher practice. While providing a critical mass of teachers with professional development of sufficient duration does not guarantee that professional development will change teacher practice (because other dimensions of quality come into play that will be discussed in the next chapter), it is likely an important precondition if professional development is to lead to changes in instruction.

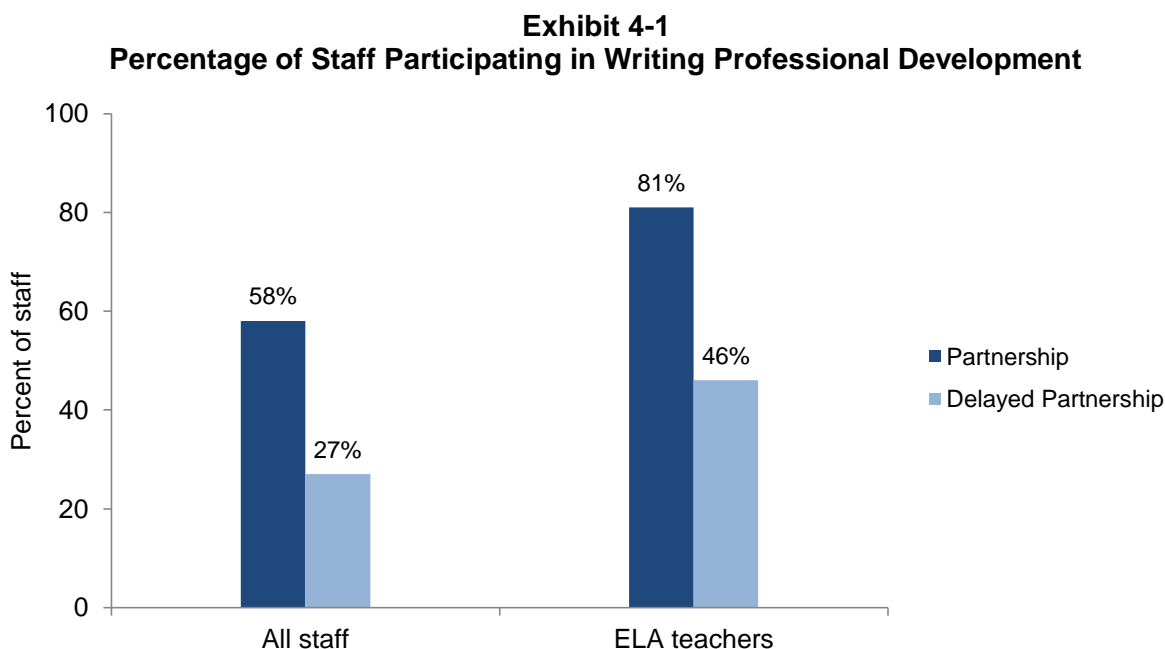
This chapter addresses two questions: (1) Do teachers in partnership schools participate in more professional development in writing than teachers in delayed partnership schools? and (2) How does collective participation in and duration of partnership professional development vary across partnership schools? In addressing these questions (and other questions in subsequent chapters), we examine the participation of all staff (including ELA teachers), all ELA teachers, and the participation of seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers. These groups represent (1) the population of teachers who took the survey and participated in interviews (all staff); (2) the most common audience for professional development on writing (ELA teachers); and (3) the population of teachers from whom we collect instructional logs, teacher assignments and student work, and student writing prompts (seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers). Overall, as we found last year, partnerships offered more opportunities for teacher participation in writing professional development, but there was substantial variation in participation within and across partnerships.

### Differences in Participation in Writing Professional Development in Partnership and Delayed Partnership Schools

In order for partnerships to support more improvements in teacher instructional practice and student outcomes in writing than would occur in the absence of the partnership, we hypothesized that partnerships need to provide more high-quality professional development than teachers would otherwise receive. In this section, we compare the participation rates in writing professional development between teachers in partnership and delayed partnership schools, and the amount of professional development that participating teachers received, to evaluate whether partnership teachers received more professional development in writing than teachers in delayed partnership schools. As described in Chapter 1, delayed partnership schools agreed not to a) seek out new professional development in writing that did not predate the study and/or that was not mandated by the state or district or b) participate in Local Writing Project professional development during the life of the study. In the section below, we report on the proportion of staff in delayed partnership schools that participated in professional development allowable under study conditions and the amount of professional development that they received.

**Participation rates in Writing Professional Development were higher in partnership schools than in delayed partnership schools.**

In looking at writing professional development in partnership and delayed partnership schools, one important dimension is the teacher participation rate. Teachers in partnership schools were more likely to participate in writing professional development (from Local Writing Project sites and other sources) than teachers in delayed partnership schools. Exhibit 4-1 shows that both for all certified staff<sup>13</sup> and for ELA teachers specifically,<sup>14</sup> the participation rate in writing professional development was over 30 percentage points higher at partnership schools compared with delayed partnership schools.<sup>15</sup> Across both partnership and delayed partnership schools, ELA teachers were more likely than the staff as a whole to participate in writing professional development.



Source: 2009–10 teacher survey

<sup>13</sup> This report uses specific language in describing the survey respondents. We administered the teacher survey to all staff holding certificated positions aside from the principal in each school. This included administrators (other than the principal), instructional coaches, and potentially librarians or other employees if they held credentials that enabled them to provide instruction to students. The vast majority of eligible staff was teachers. We use the phrase “staff” when describing responses to questions that all staff aside from principals holding certificated positions answered. Some questions, however, only applied to classroom teachers. Examples of these are questions about classroom instruction. In reporting on these questions, we use the term “all teachers” to describe the respondents.

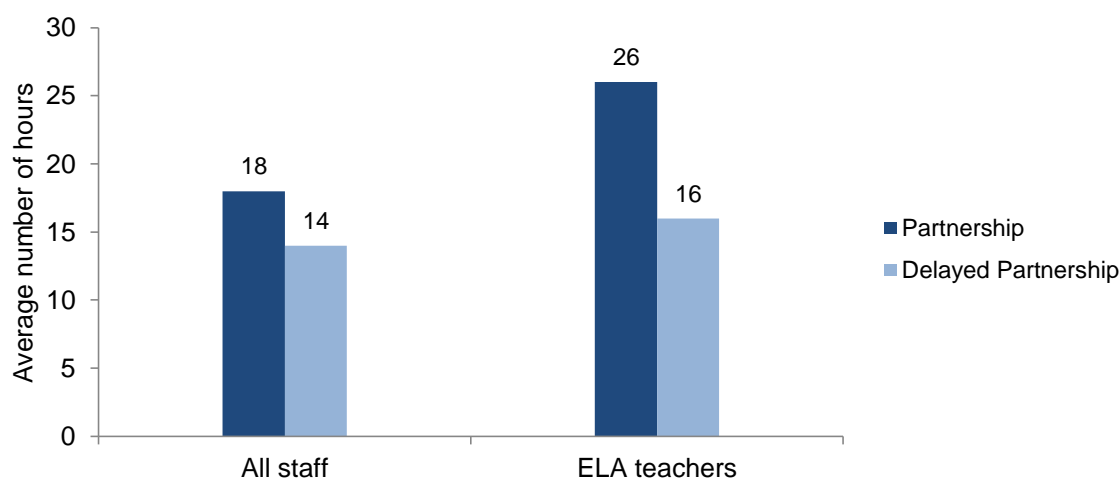
<sup>14</sup> This report uses specific language when reporting out on findings involving “ELA teachers.” Data from the survey includes in the definition of ELA teachers all teachers who report teaching any language arts classes at any grade level. Within *partnership schools*, there is substantial variation among participants in partnership professional development, and so to examine ELA teachers in order to make appropriate comparisons of these teachers across the partnership schools, we are able only to accurately count the seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers who are identified because of their participation in other data collection activities, that is, teacher logs. Consequently, we do not contrast and report out on “ELA teachers” and “non-ELA teachers” because of the likelihood that we may miss capturing teachers that do not teach ELA in grades 7 and 8, but may teach ELA in other grades or to special populations of students, for example, special education, English language learners, and so on.

<sup>15</sup> All differences are statistically significant at  $p < .05$  unless otherwise noted.

## Those teachers in partnership schools who participated in writing professional development received more professional development than those in delayed partnership schools.

Looking at the second dimension of high-quality professional development, the duration of the professional development received by educators, we found a similar trend: Among teachers who participated in some writing professional development, teachers in partnership schools received more professional development than teachers in delayed partnership schools. As Exhibit 4-2 shows, among ELA teachers who participated in some writing professional development, those in partnership schools received more professional development than their counterparts in delayed partnership schools. For the staff as a whole, however, there was not a statistically significant difference ( $p = 0.13$ ) in the duration of writing professional development that those who participated in writing professional development received.

**Exhibit 4-2**  
**Average Duration of Writing Professional Development for Participating Staff**



Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

Note: The difference between the percentages for all staff in partnership versus delayed partnership schools is not statistically significant. For further information, see Exhibit C-4.2 in Appendix C.

When combined with the difference in participation rates (see Exhibit 4-1), these data show that partnerships increase the participation rate in writing professional development for all staff. Furthermore, partnerships increase the duration of writing professional development that participating ELA teachers receive.

## Variation in Participation in Partnership Professional Development

As described in previous chapters of this report, significant variation existed across partnerships in terms of site and school capacity and planning processes, which in turn led to variation in participation rates and amounts. Here, we describe the variation in participation in partnership professional development across and within partnership schools. This section uses data collected directly from Local Writing Project sites to describe participation in *partnership* writing professional development (as opposed to using teacher reports on the survey to estimate participation in writing professional development from *any* source as in the previous section). We first examine partnership participation rates and the duration of professional development participants received. We close by exploring the implications of this variation on the potential for partnerships to change teacher professional practices around writing instruction.

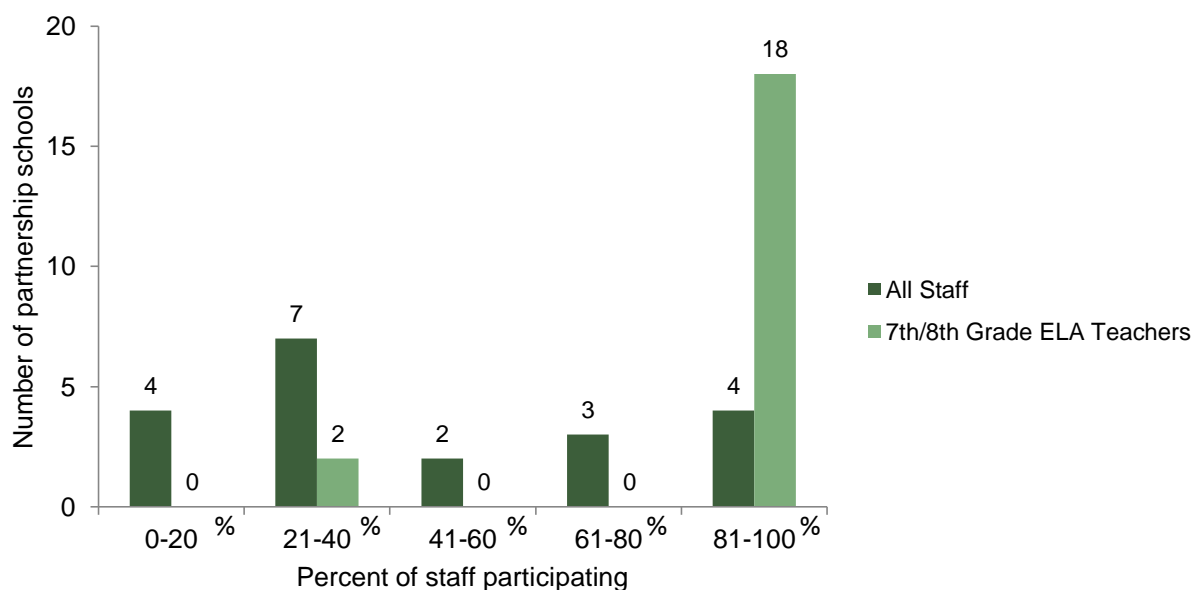
## Partnership Participation Rates

Using participation data collected directly from the Local Writing Projects, this section examines participation rates in partnership professional development—more specifically, the proportion of all staff and the proportion of seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers in each partnership who attended at least one professional development event during the second year of partnership implementation. Participation rates likely indicate a baseline level of awareness and describe the upper boundary of the proportion of teachers who are directly impacted by partnership work. We also describe key sources of the variation.

### Participation rates in partnership professional development varied across partnership schools due to both the difficulty in recruiting non-ELA teachers and some partnerships' orientation toward ELA teachers.

When considering the whole staff (including all teachers and administrators), participation in partnership professional development tended to vary quite significantly from partnership to partnership (see Exhibit 4-3). We found that overall participation rates ranged from as low as 10% in two partnership schools to as high as 94% in another. In contrast, the rate of participation for seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers was nearly universally higher than the rate of participation for all staff and, in most partnership schools, a significant majority of ELA teachers participated in some capacity. This high rate of participation is important because it signals collective participation from a group of teachers. At 18 of the 20 partnership schools, 81 to 100% of seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers participated in at least one partnership professional development event; in fact, at 15 of these 18 schools, 100% of seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers participated in at least one such event.

**Exhibit 4-3**  
**Distribution of Partnership Schools by Staff Participation Rates in Partnership Professional Development**



Source: 2009–10 quarterly partnership monitoring.

One source of the variation in participation rates was the difficulty some partnerships faced recruiting non-ELA teachers due to a lack of interest on the part of these teachers to engage in what they viewed as ELA-focused professional development. One school, for instance, had to move away from whole school

participation and concentrate on the ELA teachers after non-ELA teachers protested being required to participate in professional development that they did not perceive as relevant to their instruction. At another partnership, in 2009–10, all math teachers were required to attend a demonstration and debrief in order to get exposure to what writing could look like in math class and counter beliefs in the math department that writing professional development did not apply to them. As the teacher-consultant noted, “This year we had math for first time. We demanded that, because math teachers were never there, and they ridiculed the other teachers.”

Partly as a result of this lack of interest from non-ELA teachers, at 6 of the 20 partnership schools, ELA teachers have been the primary participants. As a result, their partnerships became more oriented toward these ELA teachers—another source of variation in participation rates between ELA and non-ELA teachers. Two of these partnership schools made participation mandatory for most ELA teachers and, in two others, the school leader sought out certain teachers from the ELA department for participation.

The fact that 30% of the partnership schools focused almost solely within the ELA department suggests that this department, and not the whole school, may be the more appropriate unit of analysis for those partnerships. The National Writing Project vision of partnership work does not specify that the entire school ought to be participating in partnership work so these partnerships are not showing less “fidelity” to the National Writing Project partnership model than others that work with teachers across the school. However, the existence of ELA department-level partnerships means that schoolwide comparisons between partnership and delayed partnership schools include some teachers in partnership schools who are not, in fact, the subjects of the treatment and so may underestimate the impact of the work on these partnerships.

### **Duration of Partnership Professional Development**

Prior literature on professional development discussed above has shown that teachers need a sufficient amount of professional development to change their practice, but there is no consensus on exactly what a “sufficient” amount is (Desimone, 2009). In this section, we often use a benchmark of 30 or more hours of partnership professional development in a single year.<sup>16</sup> We first describe the overall variation in the amount of professional development staff members in partnership schools received and then analyze duration within and across partnerships. This analysis lets us examine whether partnerships varied in the extent to which they were providing an intensive amount of professional development to a critical mass of teachers.

Prior literature on professional development discussed above has shown that teachers need a sufficient amount of professional development to change their practice, and but there is no consensus on exactly what a sufficient amount is (Desimone, 2009). We first describe the overall variation in the amount

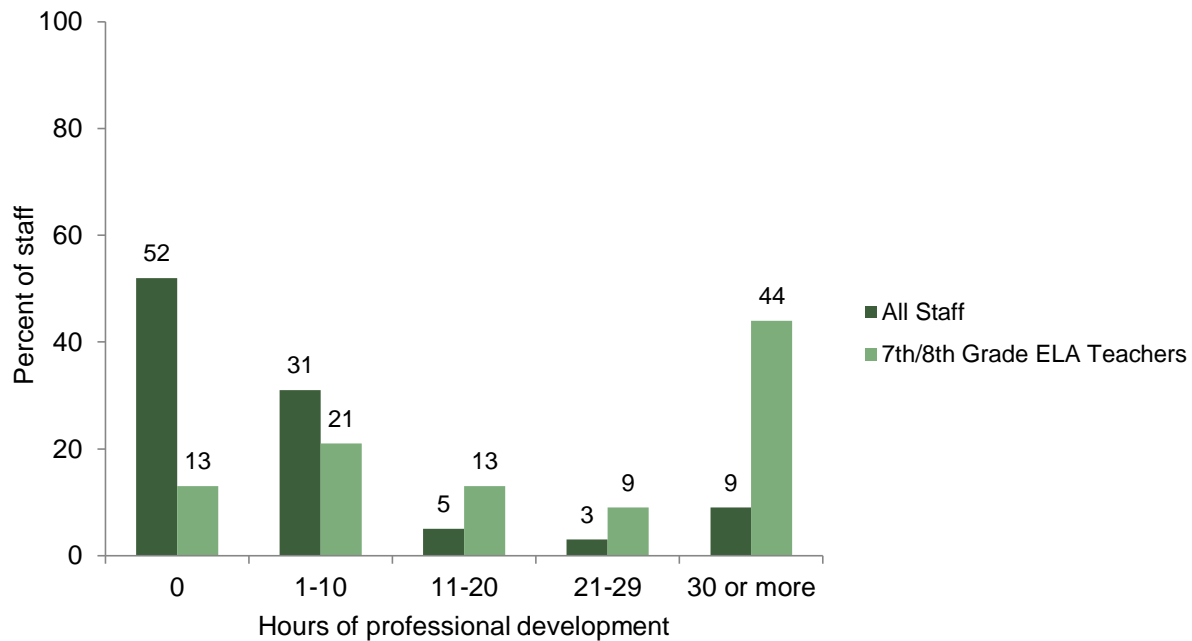
### **Staff in partnership schools received varied levels of professional development; key sources of variation were teaching assignment and partnership.**

Wide variation existed in the duration of professional development that staff in partnership schools received (see Exhibit 4-4). The exhibit shows one factor related to the variation, namely teacher assignment. Seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers typically received a higher duration of professional development than all staff. In fact, nearly five times the proportion of seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers (44%) than all staff (9%) received 30 or more hours of partnership professional development during the second year of partnership implementation.

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<sup>16</sup> The 30-hour benchmark was initially developed by a focus group of Local Writing Project site directors who believed that this was a reasonable amount of professional development for teachers in partnership schools to receive.

**Exhibit 4-4**  
**Duration of Partnership Professional Development Received by All Staff**



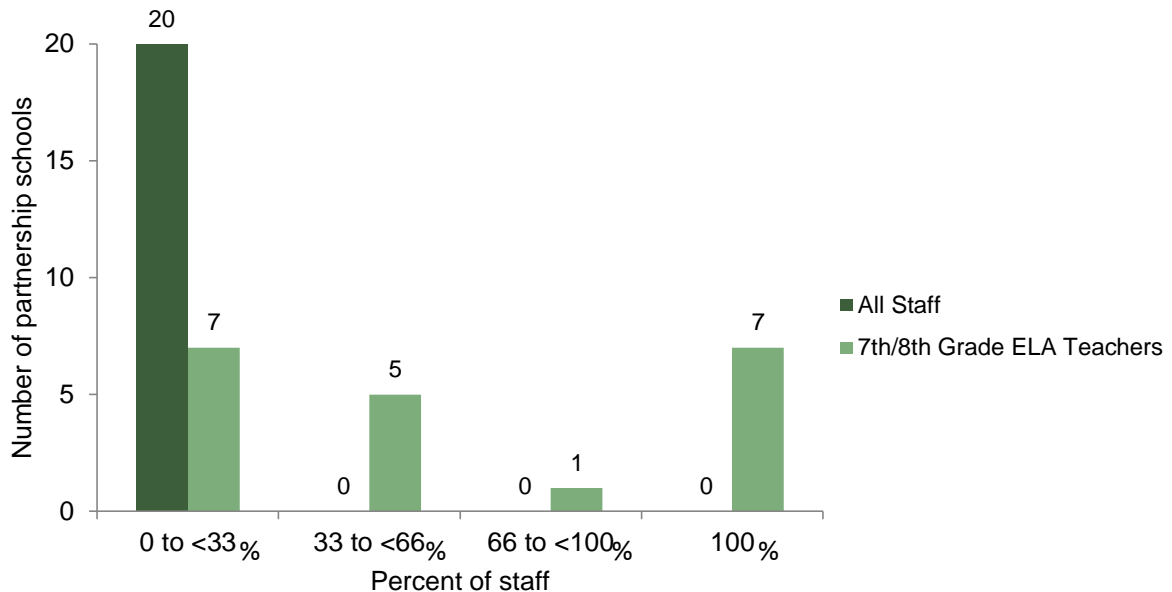
Source: 2009–10 quarterly partnership monitoring.

Another source of the variation in duration of participation is the partnerships themselves. In other words, teachers in some partnerships were more likely than those in other partnerships to receive 30 or more hours of partnership professional development. When partnerships begin to deliver higher levels (30 or more hours) to a growing group of teachers, the partnership can leverage teachers' collective participation to support changes in outcomes. (In Chapter 6, we provide data to show one mechanism by which collective participation increases the effects of professional development.)

In examining collective participation, we look at two potential units for change in writing instruction: the whole staff and the ELA department, the latter of which tends to be the focus of work in many partnerships. With the school as the unit of analysis (see Exhibit 4-5), we see that in every partnership school, less than one-third of staff participated in 30 or more hours of professional development, although this statistic belies substantial differences among these 20 schools. For example, delving deeper into the variation among these partnership schools, two partnerships came relatively close to the mark of having one-third staff receiving 30 or more hours of partnership professional development (at 27% and 20%, respectively). At the other end of the spectrum, 11 partnership schools had less than 10% of educators meet this threshold of intensity, three of which had no staff receive 30 or more hours of partnership professional development. As with preceding data on participation, the picture looks substantially different when the unit of analysis is the ELA department (represented by seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers). In seven partnership schools, 100% of seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers received 30 or more hours of partnership professional development, and in seven other partnership schools less than one-third of seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers received 30 or more hours of partnership professional development, with the remaining six partnerships falling somewhere in between.



**Exhibit 4-5**  
**Percentage of Staff Across Partnership Schools**  
**Who Received 30 or More Hours of Professional Development**



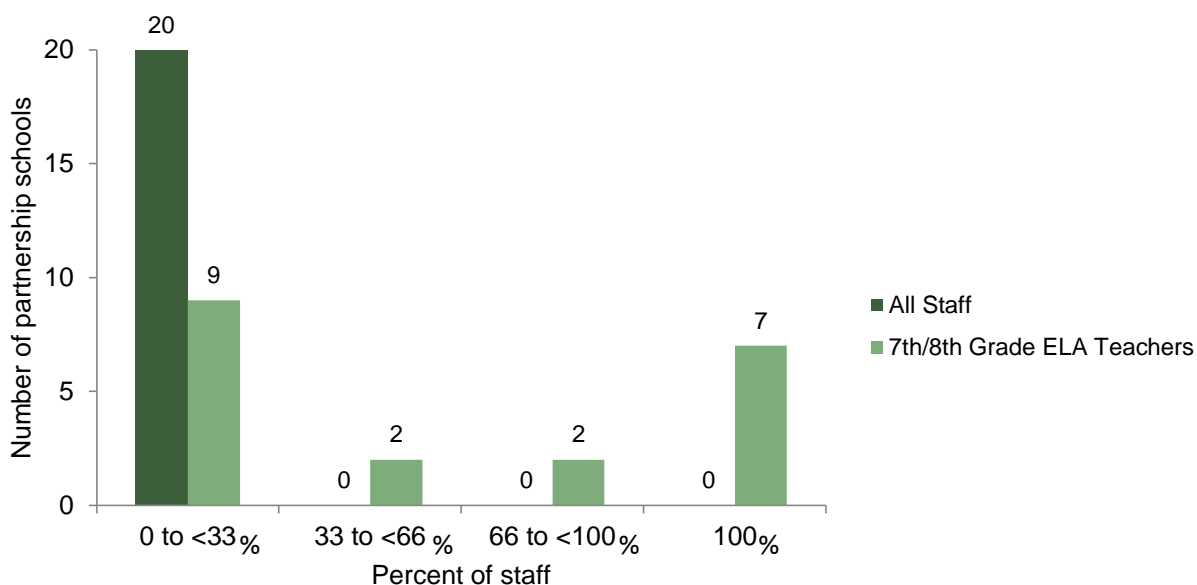
Source: 2009–10 quarterly partnership monitoring.

Multiyear partnerships accumulate a critical mass of higher-level participants over time. Next, we examine these trends across both years of partnership implementation.

**Similar patterns emerged when examining both years of partnership work (2008–09 and 2009–10). No partnerships had more than one-third of all staff members participate intensely in partnership professional development, but several partnerships reached a critical mass of seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers.**

In addition to examining the number of teachers who participated in 30 or more hours of partnership professional development in the second year of partnership implementation, we also looked at the number of teachers who participated in partnership professional development at an “intense” level (defined as at least 60 hours over the 2 years of partnership implementation, see Exhibit 4-6). A greater percentage of seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers participated “intensely” than the staff as a whole. No partnerships had more than one-third of all staff participating in 60 or more hours of professional development. In contrast, 11 partnerships had 33% or more of their seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers participating in at least 60 hours of professional development, and 7 of these partnerships had 100% of their seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers participating “intensely.”

**Exhibit 4-6**  
**Percentage of Staff Across Partnership Schools**  
**Who Received 60 or More Hours of Professional Development Over 2 Years**



Source: 2009–10 quarterly partnership monitoring.

These data suggest that some partnerships have had a reasonable opportunity to build capacity with a critical mass of seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers, though most have made fewer inroads with the staff as a whole.

### **Sites varied in the extent to which they had teachers from partnership schools attend their Invitational Summer Institute (ISI).**

One professional development activity that provided some teachers with an “intense” duration of partnership professional development was the Invitational Summer Institute. The ISI is a flagship professional development opportunity offered by every Local Writing Project site. As the name suggests, participation is granted by invitation through a competitive application process. The ISI is designed for teachers already on the path to higher-quality writing instruction who choose to spend substantial time (more than 100 hours) over the course of a summer deeply investigating writing and writing instruction in the Local Writing Project site’s professional community. In addition to providing teachers with higher-intensity professional development as a strategy to build their individual capacity to change writing instruction in their own classrooms, some Local Writing Project sites tried to use the ISI as a strategy for supporting change in partnership schools.

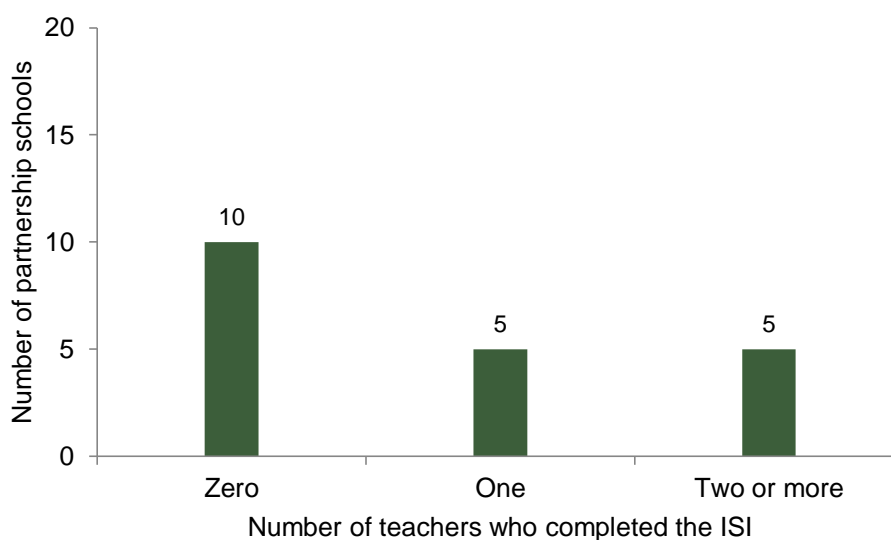
To be eligible for the study, schools were required to have no more than one teacher who had completed the ISI on their school staff. This requirement existed because the ISI can serve three purposes, each of which might make a school unsuited (if it had too many teachers who completed the ISI) to have assumed delayed partnership (or “control”) status. First, the ISI might improve the instructional practices of individuals who participate. Second, the ISI might forge permanent connections between participants and the Local Writing Project site. Finally, the ISI’s focus on teacher leadership might support those teachers in leading change in instructional practices within their own schools. Many Local Writing Project sites have reported that work with schools (outside of the study) is often initiated by a group of teachers within a school or district who

have completed the ISI. Given the valuable roles Local Writing Project sites have seen teachers who completed the ISI play in partnership work outside the study, many (but not all) sites have attempted to recruit teachers in partnership schools who are ready and willing to make the commitment to participate in the ISI. Chapter 6 describes the teacher leadership outcomes for teachers who attended the ISI as part of partnership work, providing insights into the conditions under which this strategy is more or less likely to be effective in partnership work.

During the first year of partnership implementation, 12 teachers from eight partnership schools attended the 2008 ISI hosted by their Local Writing Project site, followed by 8 teachers from five partnership schools during the summer of 2009.<sup>17</sup> Across both years of partnership implementation, of the 20 teachers who completed the ISI, 17 remained teaching in their respective partnership schools by the end of the 2009–10 school year (one additional ISI participant moved to the high school after the first year of partnership implementation and is no longer included in our data collection activities, but she continues to be actively involved in partnership professional development).

However, these 20 ISI participants were not evenly distributed across all partnership schools or across all subject areas. As shown in Exhibit 4-7, five partnerships have had two or more teachers who completed an ISI since partnership inception teaching at the partnership school during 2009–10; an additional five partnerships had one teacher. Ten partnerships had no teachers on staff who have completed an ISI since partnership inception.

**Exhibit 4-7**  
**Number of Teachers Who Completed the ISI in Partnership Schools as of 2009–10**



Source: 2009–10 quarterly partnership monitoring.

<sup>17</sup> We do not report the counts of all individuals who have ever participated in the ISI within partnership schools. Given that teachers can attend an ISI at one site and ultimately teach in a service area of another site (and thus be a potential unknown to the local site) and because teachers who have completed the ISI vary in when they participated in the ISI and the extent to which they stay active with the site over time, it has not been possible for us to verify counts of all potential teachers who completed the ISI in partnership schools. We have confirmed that all partnership schools met the initial criteria and have no more than one teacher who remained “active” with the Local Writing Project site after completing the ISI.

The teaching assignments of ISI participants paralleled the teaching assignments of other “high intensity” participants. While there were participants from across the content areas, the majority (60%) of ISI participants were seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers.

### **Making Inroads into Partnership Schools**

This chapter has focused on two of the characteristics of effective professional development: collective participation and duration. In this final section, we examine two implicit theories about how partnerships could provide enough teachers sufficient professional development to change instructional practice in a school. On the one hand, partnerships could seek the collective participation of either the whole school or of the ELA department, which is the focus of much partnership work.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, partnerships could attempt to transform a few teachers, through the ISI, in ways that not only change their own practice but also position them to lead improvement in writing instruction within their own schools. Partnerships could potentially make important inroads to a school through one or both strategies.

**Most partnerships have either built a core group of ELA teachers who have collectively experienced relatively high levels of partnership professional development or have engaged two or more teachers in the ISI.**

It is possible to examine the extent to which partnerships are reaching a critical mass of school staff either by looking at the school as a whole or by looking within the ELA department. Because many partnerships focused their most extensive professional development work on ELA teachers and progress in this department is important for influencing student writing, we examined the intensity of participation within the ELA department. To see the distribution of partnerships across these two strategies, we arrayed (1) the proportion of seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers participating at an “intense” level, and (2) the number of school staff from all departments who have completed the ISI since partnership work began and who were still teaching at the school at the end of the 2009–10 school year (see Exhibit 4-8).<sup>19</sup>

**Exhibit 4-8**  
**Proportion of Intense Partnership Professional Development Participants  
by Number of Teachers Who Completed the ISI**

Rate of participation in “intense” level of partnership professional development	Number of teachers who completed the ISI still on school staff at conclusion of 2009–10 academic year			
	0 ISI graduates	1 ISI graduate	2 + ISI graduates	Total
0-33% of ELA teachers	5	1	3	9
34-66% of ELA teachers	1	1	0	2
67-100% of ELA teachers	4	3	2	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>20</b>

Source: 2009–10 quarterly partnership monitoring.

When we examine the concentration of “intense” partnership participants and the number of ISI graduates, we see that 5 of the 20 partnerships have no seventh- or eighth-grade ELA teachers with “intense”

<sup>18</sup> Because all partnerships had less than one-third of all staff participating “intensely” (as defined by participating in 60 or more hours of partnership professional development over the first and second years of partnership implementation), an examination of the intersection of “intense” participation rates and ISI graduates would look the same as the distribution of ISI graduates shown above (see Exhibit 4-7).

<sup>19</sup> Exhibit 4-8 focuses on staff in partnership schools during 2009–10 (i.e., the set of teachers from whom we collected outcome measures during that year). Teachers who, for example, completed the ISI during summer 2008 but left the partnership school after the 2008–09 school year are not included.

participation and no ISI graduates.<sup>20</sup> If these measures are indicative of the opportunity Local Writing Project sites have had to build capacity at partnership schools, these five partnerships have not made substantial inroads to date. The remaining 15 partnerships are distributed across almost all of the other cells, showing, yet again, the variation within the group of partnership schools.

## Conclusion

As we found in prior years, teachers in partnership schools were more likely than teachers in delayed partnership schools to participate in writing professional development. And, for staff who participated in writing professional development, those in partnership schools received more professional development, on average, than those in delayed partnership schools.

Within partnership schools, however, we saw significant variation in the amount of professional development teachers received, particularly when comparing seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers to the staff as a whole. In general, seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers were much more likely to not only have participated in partnership professional development, but also to have received 30 or more hours in 1 year or 60 or more hours over the 2 years of partnership implementation (an “intense” level of participation). Given that ELA teachers have higher participation rates than the staff as a whole on all measures, for partnerships that are reaching a critical mass of teachers, it may be that change is more likely to come (in many partnerships) within the ELA department as opposed to the school as a whole. When we examine partnerships by the proportion of seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers who have received an “intense” level of professional development or the number of ISI graduates on school staff, we see that partnerships used varied strategies make inroads into schools. We will examine the outcomes associated with this professional development in Chapter 6. The next chapter, Chapter 5, describes the nature of the partnership professional development that participants received

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<sup>20</sup> In one of these partnerships, 13% of all staff participated at an “intense” level; in the other four, no teachers participated at that level.



## Chapter 5. The Content and Nature of Writing Professional Development

As the previous chapters outline, many factors impacted the presentation of professional development at schools: site and school capacity, the planning process, and teacher participation in professional development activities. Now we turn to the professional development itself: what it focused on and the extent to which it showed markers of effective professional development. Professional development is the lynchpin of the partnership work. Through it, teachers will or will not learn new strategies and ways of thinking. Therefore, it is important to examine it closely to see what it entails and how likely it is to influence teacher practice. This chapter looks at partnership professional development through the lens of effective professional development and writing instruction as described in the literature. It begins with an examination of the professional development content and then moves to factors that enable implementation of new practices in the teachers' classrooms. We examine the professional development experiences of two groups of teachers—ELA teachers and all staff (including ELA teachers). Finally, we note the similarities of the professional development in study and naturally occurring partnerships.

The introduction lays out five key features of effective professional development identified in the literature: content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation. In Chapters 3 and 4, we discussed the importance of planning for coherence, and the duration of and collective participation in professional development. Here, we further examine the importance of coherence in professional development and also discuss the significance of content focus and active learning in the context of National Writing Project partnership work and the variation in these features across partnerships.

The writing field has also developed a consensus over what constitutes effective writing instruction for adolescents. Writing Next (2007) identifies 11 research-based strategies for teaching teens to write well and to use writing as a tool for learning. These include a process writing approach (one in which students develop their writing through an iterative, reflective process involving feedback from teachers and peers), use of models and prewrites, inquiry activities, collaborative writing, and writing for content learning. While the National Writing Project does not advocate a single approach to the teaching of writing, its theory of change includes process writing and teaching and modeling writing as an active knowledge-building process; thus, we would expect to see evidence of this in the professional development.

### Content Focus

As discussed in Chapter 4, we hypothesize that the amount of time spent in high-quality professional development correlates to the impact that professional development has on teachers' practice. If that is the case, then the focus of professional development can be a driver for what actually changes in teachers' practice since more time will be spent on that content. Thus, it is important for us to examine the content of professional development in partnership schools both as it compares to the content of professional development in delayed partnership schools and to explore similarities and differences across study partnerships.

In 2009–10, the partnership professional development focused on a wide variety of topics. However, across the partnerships, four major foci emerged for the work: writing to learn, teaching writing processes, building teacher community, and engaging teachers as writers.<sup>21</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, even within

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<sup>21</sup> We collected reports from Local Writing Project sites at the end of each semester asking them to describe the two main foci of each event or sequence of events that shared a common format or focus (e.g., a workshop series or the Invitational Summer Institute). We analyzed these along with interview and observation data to determine the main foci of professional development.

these common foci, the professional development varied significantly in terms of the participation rates and duration of teacher participation.

Beyond these four major foci, the focus of partnership professional development was diffuse. Local Writing Project sites worked on many topics at partnership schools. These included incorporating social justice themes, revising reference notebooks, teaching vocabulary, and applying 6+1 Trait Writing.<sup>22</sup> Partnerships varied in how many professional development foci they had, with some focusing on one to three topics, while others touched on many more topics. In those partnerships that lacked a specific focus, the reasons varied. In some cases, covering a wide range of topics reflected a lack of direction in the professional development. For instance, at one school the site's main goal was just to be in the school. As the site director said, "This year...we're just happy to be in. So there's nothing that we chose to do consciously." In other cases, the multiple foci resulted from the format of the professional development. For example, some teachers participated in inquiry projects based on their own areas of interest. Topics here varied extensively, depending on the teachers' burning questions.

### **Most partnerships focused on writing to learn in the content areas, a tool for encouraging metacognition.**

Professional development at partnership schools focused on writing to learn far more frequently than any other professional development content. As we define it here, writing to learn is using writing as a tool to learn other content.<sup>23</sup> Writing to learn does not directly address discipline-specific writing. Teacher-consultants viewed it as a way to incorporate writing into all content areas and as a vehicle for improving student comprehension. As a site leader explained, "If the writing enables students to learn the content, then it doesn't feel 'extra.' " Typically, teachers from a variety of content areas were present for professional development focused on writing to learn. For instance, at one school the Local Writing Project site offered a half-day session in which teachers from all content areas read material comparing the H1N1 virus to the 1918 flu virus. Then, teachers wrote about these articles and discussed their ideas in small groups. The hope was that they would then employ similar writing-to-learn strategies in their classes. In other schools, ELA and content area teachers developed a range of strategies for incorporating more writing into their classes from using exit slips to writing diary entries from the perspective of historical figures. Again, the goal was to enable student understanding through writing.

### **Some of the professional development—specifically teaching writing processes and engaging teachers as writers—focused on developing teachers' content and pedagogical content knowledge.**

In the literature on effective professional development, content focus is defined as a focus on subject matter content and how students learn that content (Desimone, 2009). That is, a content focus aims to deepen teachers' knowledge of their subject area and their pedagogical content knowledge. Two of the main foci of professional development in partnership schools did this: teaching writing processes and teachers as writers.

A frequent focus on **teaching writing processes** is one of the ways in which partnership professional development worked to deepen teachers' understanding of their content area and how to teach it. Writing professional development in partnership schools more frequently focused on teaching writing processes than

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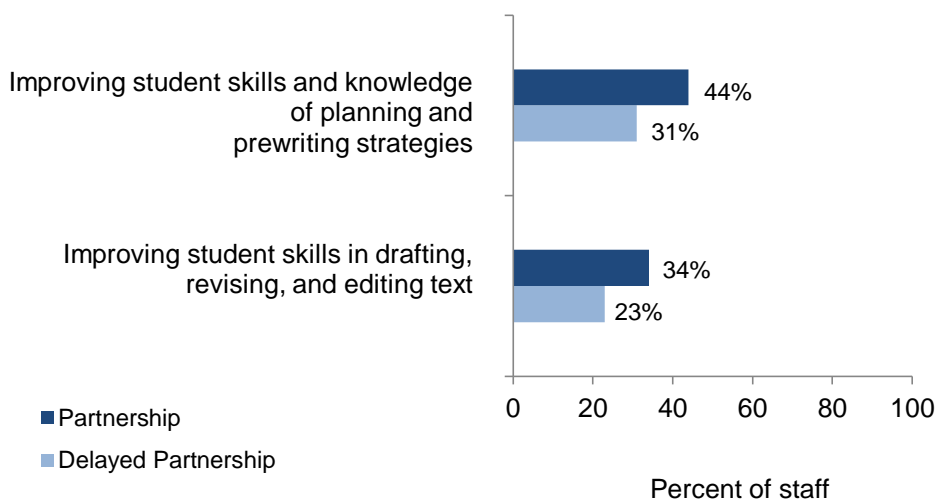
<sup>22</sup> Developed by Education Northwest, the 6+1 Trait® Writing Model of Instruction & Assessment provides a vision of what good writing looks like and establishes a common language for teachers and students to talk about the characteristics of writing. The traits are ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation.

<sup>23</sup> In reports filled out by sites every semester, sites often reported focusing on writing across the content areas. However, we use a very specific definition of what writing across the content areas looks like (i.e., how to teach writing in specific disciplines). The work sites described better matched our definition of writing to learn. Therefore, we recoded this data.



writing professional development at delayed partnership schools (see Exhibit 5-1). The differences were even more marked among English/language arts teachers: more than half of these teachers at partnership schools reported participating in professional development focused on writing processes, while about a third of English/language arts teachers at delayed partnership schools reported doing so (see Exhibit 5-2).<sup>24</sup>

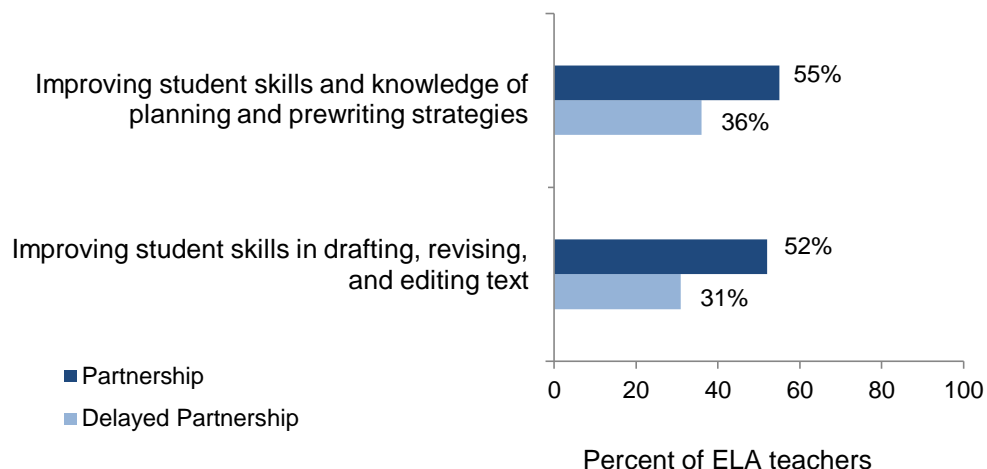
**Exhibit 5-1**  
**Percentage of Staff Reporting Writing Processes**  
**as Foci of Writing Professional Development,**  
**Among All Staff Participating in Writing Professional Development**



Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

<sup>24</sup> There were no differences between partnership and delayed partnership schools in the content of writing professional development that is not associated with the National Writing Project. For example, there were no significant differences in the percentages of teachers reporting participating in professional development focused on improving student skills in grammar, usage, punctuation, or spelling. (See Appendix C for all data on the content of writing professional development.)

**Exhibit 5-2**  
**Percentage of ELA Teachers Reporting Writing Processes**  
**as Foci of Writing Professional Development,**  
**Among ELA Teachers Participating in Writing Professional Development**



Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

This focus is particularly important as it gets to the foundation of how the National Writing Project and the field view effective writing: as a process of creating and revising with input from others. Across sites, topics included conferencing, the use of models of teachers’ unfinished writing, and how to teach grammar in the context of process writing, and more. For instance, at one school, the teacher-consultant modeled differentiated instruction in the writing process in back-to-back days of classroom demonstrations. The lesson introduced students to supporting a personal argument in persuasive writing. The teacher-consultant used mentor text in the mini-lesson and then, together, the class developed support for an argument and wrote a persuasive piece. Next, students met in small groups to discuss what they would like to write for their individual persuasive pieces before actually writing them. Finally, the class worked on revision lessons to strengthen the students’ arguments. In this way, the teacher-consultant hoped that the teacher could see ways to incorporate opportunities to meet students’ individual needs into her classes as she modeled the writing process.

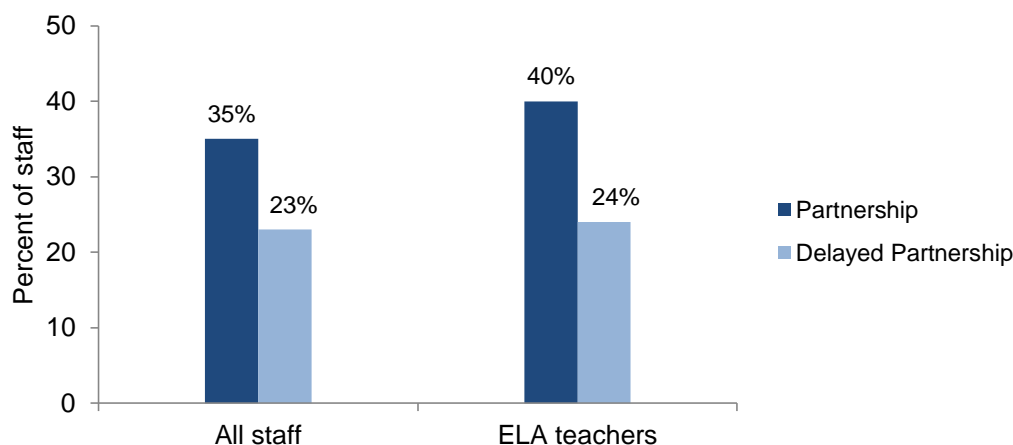
Another focus of partnership professional development that can be described as “content focused” is **engaging teachers as writers**. Many sites engaged teachers as writers with two aims: to help them overcome their own discomfort with writing and to help them understand the process that students go through when they write. Many participating teachers described feeling uncomfortable writing themselves. As one said, “I hate writing, and I need to get over this hatred of writing.” In order to help participants overcome this dislike or fear, teacher-consultants created opportunities for them to write. As a teacher-consultant explained, “Almost to a teacher, they expressed their nervousness at being asked to write themselves. Therefore, the 4-day institute was designed to address their fears.” At the same time, by writing, teachers can gain an understanding into what the process entails, and this understanding can inform their teaching. For instance, after a professional development session, a teacher-consultant asked teachers: “What did I learn about writing as a result of today’s session? How does this change/reinforce my beliefs about teaching writing/reading? What do I do with this in my own classroom?” Thus, the professional developers hoped to prompt teachers to think about changes they could make to their lessons based on their new understandings. Across partnerships, writing topics ranged from creating poetry and personal stories to responding to a prompt. Again, through engaging teachers in these different writing experiences, teacher-consultants hoped that

teachers would overcome their fear of writing and/or gain an understanding of what it means to be a writer and apply this vision to their classroom.

**Other professional development focused on developing the National Writing Project core principles of building teacher community and teacher leadership.**

Many Local Writing Project sites reported **building teacher community** as either a primary or secondary goal of partnership professional development. The learning that takes place in and the wisdom that arises from well-informed teacher communities are the foundations upon which the National Writing Project was built. As discussed in Chapter 4, the literature also states that the community that can be built through collective participation can create a powerful setting for learning (Desimone, 2009). Herein lies one of the potentials of partnership work—it allows for collective participation within a school. As Exhibit 5-3 shows, more teachers who participated in writing professional development at partnership schools reported receiving professional development around improving teacher collaboration on writing instruction than their counterparts in delayed partnership schools. However, this difference was not statistically significant. The difference was significant when we narrowed our focus to ELA teachers: 40% of ELA teachers who participated in writing professional development reported receiving professional development focused on improving collaboration on writing instruction, compared to 24% of the teachers in delayed partnership schools who participated in writing professional development.

**Exhibit 5-3**  
**Percentage of Staff Reporting Improving Collaboration on Writing Instruction**  
**as a Focus of Writing Professional Development,**  
**Among Staff Participating in Writing Professional Development**



Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

Note: The difference between the percentages for all staff in partnership versus delayed partnership schools is not statistically significant (although at  $p = 0.06$ , it approaches statistical significance). For further information, see Exhibit C-5.1 in Appendix C.

In the partnership schools, professional development aimed at building teacher community mainly focused on enabling teachers to use their work time together more productively. This focus on how work time is used aligns with literature that states that professional developers can enable teachers to have deeper, more substantive conversations about their work by helping teachers to develop ways of interacting that enable these discussions (Coburn & Russell, 2008). At times this focus resulted from sites' assessments of a school's culture. For instance, at one site where teachers reported significant difficulty working together, the goal was to facilitate the beginning of collaborative relationships. For other partnerships, efforts included focusing

teachers' discussions on topics like reviewing student work. To this end, a number of partnerships used protocols to facilitate discussions, enable teachers to have more constructive conversation, and use meeting time more effectively while also learning new strategies. As a teacher-consultant said about using protocols, "It takes longer than just informal sharing, but you get better results." For instance, at one school with many cross-grade and within-grade tensions, teacher-consultants introduced a tuning protocol in order to establish norms of respect and to mitigate anxiety when teachers worked together on partnership professional development. The protocol stated the following:

Participation in a structured process of professional collaboration like this can be intimidating and anxiety producing, especially for the teacher presenting the work. Having a shared set of guidelines or norms helps everyone participate in a manner that is respectful as well as conducive to helpful feedback.

This particular protocol then set out specific steps to be taken, including time for a teacher presentation, clarifying questions, examining student work, reflections, warm and cool feedback, a second reflection, and a debrief. The idea was that by developing these norms, the group would be able to work together effectively in professional development.

Although **teacher leadership** was not one of the four main foci, we examined partnerships' efforts to develop teachers as leaders both because it is a key National Writing Project core principle and because of its implications for sustainability beyond the grant. Teachers teaching teachers is fundamental to the National Writing Project. Thus, developing teacher leaders who can take on that role is important. As a teacher-consultant explained, an advantage of having a teacher at the school present professional development can be that other teachers are more likely to believe that they can implement changes in their classrooms too:

It's really important if the same ideas or the same message is coming from colleagues and not just...an outside expert. It's different to hear from a classroom teacher as opposed to someone who has time during their day to think and plan. It's just more powerful. It's harder to say, 'Oh well, I couldn't possibly do that because I have these other commitments in my classroom'...when the person next to you has those same commitments and is still finding a way to make it work.

In addition, teacher leaders may be key to continuing the partnership work beyond the life of the grant. A site director said, "I think it's very important to define a role that [teacher leaders] would be involved in...[and] how that will play out when we don't have this collaboration anymore." Teacher leaders can work to ensure that the partnership work continues through discussions with colleagues and by leading professional development, for instance.

Across partnership schools, about half of the Local Writing Project sites made concerted efforts to develop teacher leaders. Strategies included inviting teachers to conferences and the Invitational Summer Institute (ISI) and offering professional development in the form of support sessions,<sup>25</sup> yearlong support for a cohort of teacher leaders, or a leadership strand outside of school for ISI graduates. In one case, a Local Writing Project site offered a practicum and a three-course series (Action Research, Presentation Skills, and Writing for Publication) leading to an advanced certificate for ISI graduates interested in becoming teacher leaders. This intense form of professional development allows participants to delve deeply into the Local Writing Project work, and thereby has the potential to prepare them for leadership. In Chapter 6, we discuss outcomes related to teacher participation in the ISI.

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<sup>25</sup> We define support sessions as one-on-one or small group work between a site director/teacher-consultant and teacher(s). Examples include planning specific lessons or activities, site-supported work on curriculum, or responding to individual teacher requests for assistance.

## **Enabling Classroom Implementation Through Active and Coherent Professional Development**

While content-focused professional development is important for changing teachers' practice, it alone is not enough. Even with a clear content focus and effectively delivered professional development, classroom implementation can be a challenge. Professional development that is both "active" and "coherent" is also important for facilitating changes in teachers' practice.

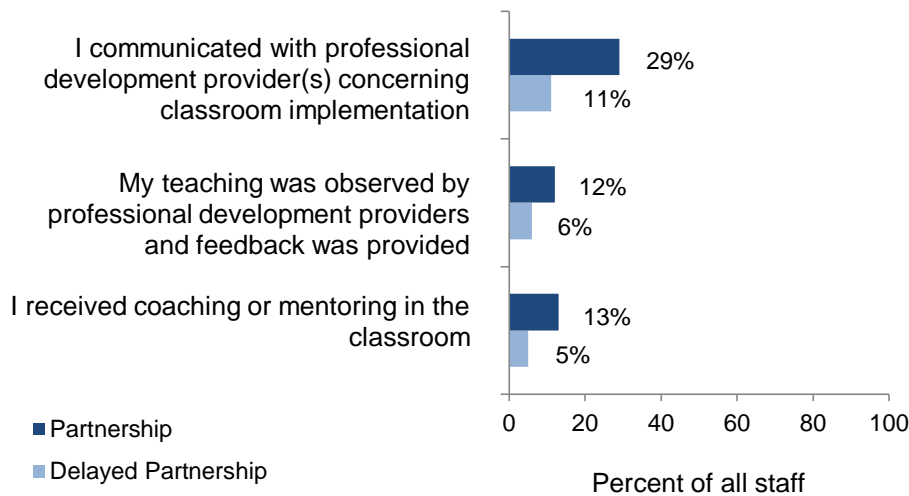
Active learning encompasses a number of activities, including demonstration lessons and classroom observations followed by feedback, discussion, and reviewing student work (Desimone, 2009). These types of professional development are often referred to as classroom-embedded professional development. However, for the purposes of this study, we expand this definition to include teachers actively participating in professional development by engaging in the activities they are learning about themselves, and reflecting upon and discussing readings and activities.

Coherence is the extent to which professional development aligns with a teacher's knowledge and beliefs and with school, district, and state reforms and policies. Coherence is fostered by professional development that takes into account teachers' own professional goals, their prior professional experiences (including past professional development), and the context in which they are working.

**Among teachers who participated in at least some writing professional development, teachers at partnership schools were more likely to report participating in "active" professional development than their counterparts at delayed partnership schools.**

Across three indicators, and among teachers participating in at least some writing professional development, the percentage of teachers who reported participating in active professional development at partnership schools was more than twice as high as the percentage of teachers who reported participating in this type of professional development at delayed partnership schools (see Exhibit 5-4). For example, nearly 3 in 10 teachers who had participated in at least some writing professional development in partnership schools reported talking with a professional development provider about classroom implementation, compared with just over 1 in 10 teachers at delayed partnership schools.

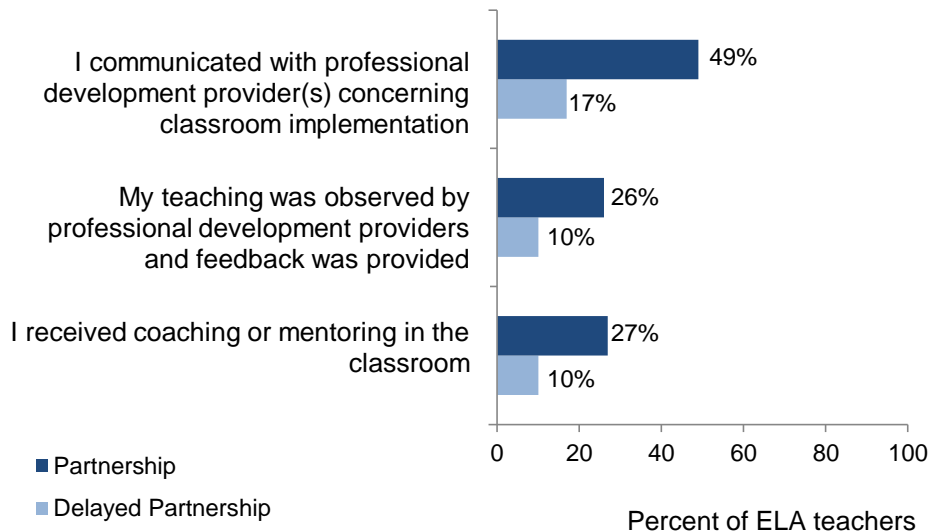
**Exhibit 5-4**  
**Percentage of Staff Participating in Active Professional Development,**  
**Among Staff Participating in Writing Professional Development**



Source: 2009-10 teacher survey.

Though the percentages are higher, the patterns are similar for participating ELA teachers. When looking just at ELA teachers, the proportion of teachers in partnership schools who experienced this type of active professional development approaches half, compared to just 17% of ELA teachers in delayed partnership schools (see Exhibit 5-5).

**Exhibit 5-5**  
**Percentage of ELA Teachers Participating in Active Professional Development,**  
**Among ELA Teachers Participating in Writing Professional Development**



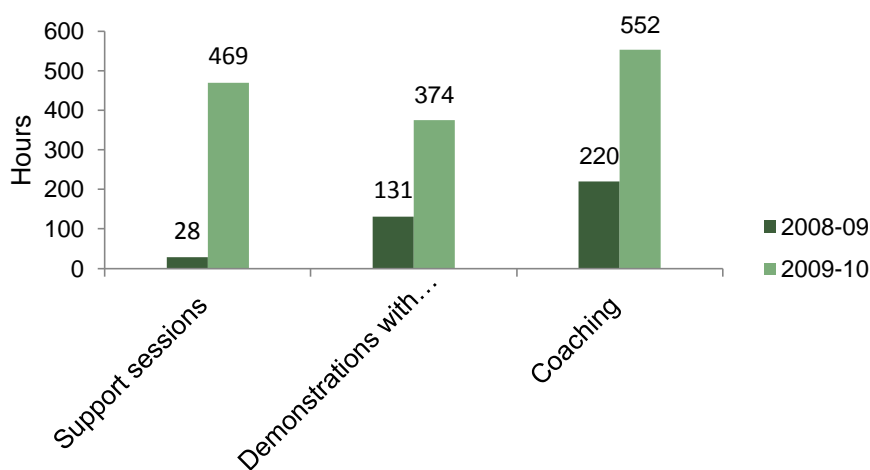
Source: 2009-10 teacher survey.

Partnership professional development that supported active learning primarily came in four formats: classroom coaching, demonstration lessons, support sessions, and inquiry projects. Almost always, Local Writing Project sites offered more than one of these formats at their partnership schools. Frequently, the same teachers participated in the different forms of classroom-embedded professional development offered by their site. Thus, a teacher might have a teacher-consultant demonstrate in her classroom and discuss what happened, and then try the lesson herself while the teacher-consultant watches and provides assistance and feedback.

**In 2009–10, the number of hours teachers in partnership schools spent engaging in active learning increased dramatically relative to 2008–09.**

As the partners' relationships developed, professional development moved closer to the classroom. In 2009–10 relative to 2008–09, teachers in numerous partnership schools spent many more hours in professional development that took the form of support sessions, demonstration lessons (with students, as opposed to demonstrations with teachers only), and in-class coaching. In fact, for all partnerships in the aggregate, the time spent on this type of active professional development more than tripled (see Exhibit 5-6).

**Exhibit 5-6**  
**Comparison of Hours of Active Partnership Professional Development,**  
**2008–09 and 2009–10**



Source: Quarterly partnership monitoring.

In part, this increase reflected teacher-consultants' desire to deepen their work within the classroom context. As a teacher-consultant explained, "[The other teacher-consultant] and I...experienced a shift in our own thinking. We began to think that going deep with individual teachers by being in their classrooms during school was more important than working with large numbers of teachers in a more surface-level way."

Through this deepened work, teacher-consultants hoped to support changes in classroom practice. This greater openness to allowing teacher-consultants into the classroom may also reflect deepened trust between teacher-consultants and the teachers they work with. However, some teacher-consultants continued to find it challenging to enter classrooms because of teacher resistance. An assistant principal said, "A lot of teachers aren't really open to someone coming in to their classroom and coaching them... It's been one of those things where you put it out there and then the teachers don't take it. I don't think [the teacher-consultant] wants to force herself into their classrooms." Reasons for this reluctance varied from concerns about student behavior to worries that the teacher-consultant would judge their teaching.

Finally, across the partnerships, teachers engaged in active, reflective professional development. Common strategies included writing to a prompt, engaging in hands-on activities, trying an activity based in research,

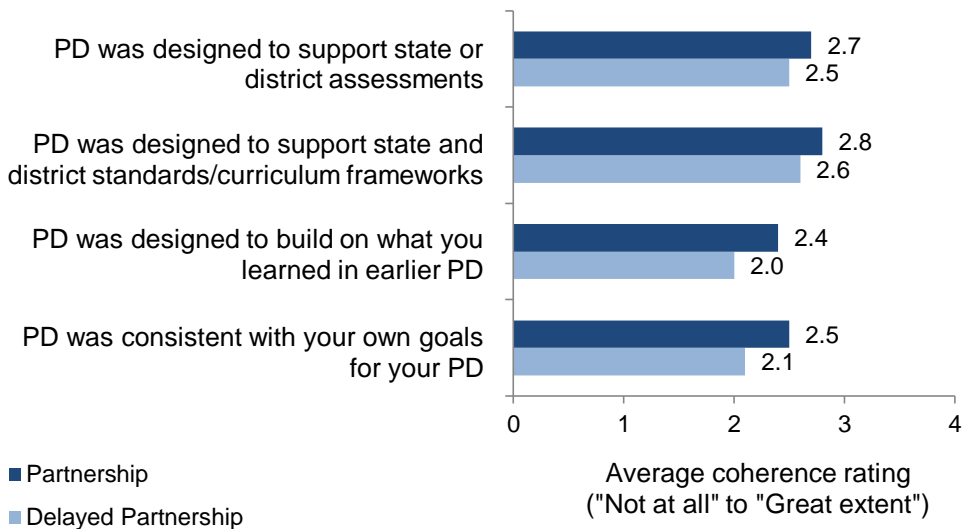
and allowing time for reflection and discussion. A site director said, “It’s really what...I would call, the National Writing Project model. Teachers experience different things, different strategies that they could use with their students. What makes them really effective is that the teachers have done them. We don’t just throw it at them as a ‘Here, here’s something you could do.’ ” For instance, at one site, teachers participating in a course learned theory and observed demonstrations led by teacher consultants. They then tried the strategies out in their classes and came back to the next class with student work from that activity. At this class meeting, they discussed how implementation went and the student work they brought. Thus, teachers participating in this class had the opportunity to learn about new strategies, try them out, and reflect upon and discuss how they went.

**Teachers in partnership schools were more likely than teachers in delayed partnership schools to report that the writing professional development they participated in was “coherent”—that is, it was consistent with their own professional development goals, built on their previous professional development experiences, and supported state and district standards, frameworks, and assessments.**

Local Writing Project sites working with partnership schools often worked to align the professional development with the teachers’ local and state context and with the teachers’ previous professional development. As discussed in Chapter 3, in some cases partnerships achieved this coherence through the planning process. Perhaps as a result of these efforts, teachers in partnership schools who participated in writing professional development rated the professional development as more coherent than did their counterparts in delayed partnership schools (see Exhibits 5-7 and 5-8). The differences were statistically significant for coherence with previous professional development and for aligning with teachers’ own professional development goals (but not for coherence in the sense of professional development designed to support state or district standards and assessments). This pattern suggests that partnership professional development often built on what teachers had learned in earlier professional development and that it took teachers’ goals into account more successfully than the professional development that teachers participated in at delayed partnership schools.



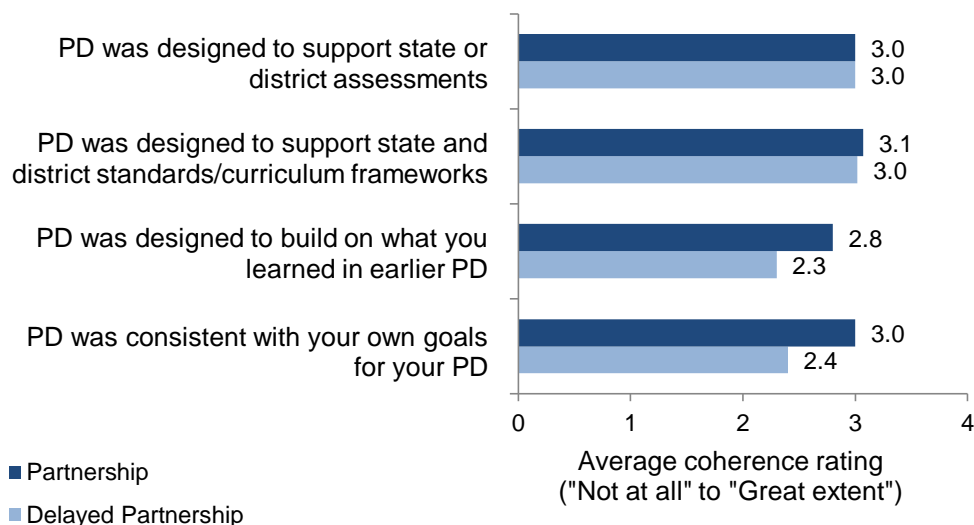
**Exhibit 5-7**  
**Coherence of Writing Professional Development**  
**as Rated by Participating Staff**



Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

Note: Differences between the coherence ratings by staff at partnership versus delayed partnership schools were not statistically significant for the first two survey items listed above (PD was designed to support state or district assessments; PD was designed to support state and district standards/curriculum frameworks), although differences approached statistical significance at  $p = 0.07$  and  $p = 0.08$ , respectively. For further information, see Exhibit C-5.3 in Appendix C.

**Exhibit 5-8**  
**Coherence of Writing Professional Development**  
**as Rated by Participating ELA Teachers**



Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

Note: Differences between the coherence ratings by ELA teachers at partnership versus delayed partnership schools were not statistically significant for the first two survey items listed above (PD was designed to support state or district assessments; PD was designed to support state and district standards/curriculum frameworks). For further information, see Exhibit C-5.3 in Appendix C.

In one case, the Local Writing Project site worked to align professional development with state mandates (by working with teachers on preparing for and grading the state assessment), with the teacher's own goals (through action research projects and demonstration lessons), and with previous professional development (by building on work done the prior year). However, coherence can involve a balancing act when departmental, district, and Local Writing Project site goals differ. For instance, as discussed in the planning chapter, in one partnership, the Local Writing Project site and some of the ELA department teachers valued "authentic reading and writing" while the district valued balanced assessment and data driven decisionmaking. The Local Writing Project site worked to "bring disparate goals together in the middle." After a long process of negotiations, the site designed professional development that helped teachers to prepare students for the state test (taking into account district goals) while also incorporating strategies and working with teachers in ways that allowed the Local Writing Project site to remain true to its philosophy regarding how teachers learn. For example, it worked to guide teachers in using a strategy, asked them to try the strategy in their classroom, and then reconvened to discuss how it worked.

## **The Nature of Professional Development in Naturally Occurring Partnerships**

How typical are the professional development offerings at study partnership schools? In order to explore this question, in 2008–09 and 2009–10, we looked at professional development provided at naturally occurring partnership schools to see how similar or different it was from that being offered at study partnership schools (see the report introduction and Appendix A for more information on the substudy of naturally occurring partnerships). Across the board, the professional development was markedly similar.

### **Professional development at naturally occurring partnership schools paralleled that at study partnership schools.**

The professional development at naturally occurring partnership schools was notably similar to the professional development at study partnership schools. It addressed a variety of topics but especially focused on writing to learn. Teacher-consultants at naturally occurring partnerships also worked to develop teacher leaders and actively engage teachers as they learned new strategies. For instance, at a naturally occurring partnership school, professional development involved the teacher-consultants giving the teachers a writing assignment to complete, followed by time to reflect on the assignment and to discuss how it went and how they could apply it to their own content areas and classes. At one professional development event, professional developers introduced teachers to using quotes as a starting point for writing in a dialectic response journal and then asked the participants to set up their journals in this way and write about a quote. During this process, the teacher-consultants also talked about strategies they had used with their students when doing these types of journals. Following this, teachers engaged in a poetry writing exercise where they wrote down words they found interesting in student work and combined them with their own words from the first activity to write a poem, which they then read aloud. At the end of the session, the group spent time debriefing what they had done and talking about how they could use it in their classrooms. A science teacher said, "I'm finishing up their bio projects, I think it would be cool to have them go around to look at each other's bio projects and make poems out of that." As with the professional development provided in study partnership schools, this approach focused on giving teachers the opportunity to work with their own writing at the same time that they deepened their understanding of how students learn to write.

As was the case with study partnership schools, beyond these foci, the naturally occurring partnership professional development focused on a wide variety of topics. These included an abbreviated Japanese lesson study, technology, and writing in different genres. The reasons for these foci also varied. For instance, at one school, the site's interest and expertise drove the focus on technology while at another school this same focus came about because of teacher interest in the topic.

## **The similarities were especially pronounced at naturally occurring and study partnership schools that shared a Local Writing Project site.**

In 2009–10, all of the naturally occurring partnerships we visited shared a Local Writing Project sites with a study partnership. In these cases, the similarities in the content and format of professional development offered at the partnerships schools were even more striking. For instance, one site focused on writing-to-learn strategies (e.g., the use of journals) to increase the frequency of writing. In both the study and naturally occurring partnership schools, the site introduced the idea journals in a summer institute. Then during the school year, the teacher-consultants followed up with professional development to support teachers' use of them. The follow-up included having the teachers complete sample activities in their own journals and then discuss how they would translate those activities into their classrooms during the school year. One study school and the naturally occurring partnership school shared a teacher-consultant and attended summer professional development together, which increased the consistency across the professional development.

## **Conclusion**

One of the basic tenets of the National Writing Project is that there is no single best way to teach writing and that local communities of practice are best positioned to create writing programs. Therefore, it is not surprising that the professional development provided across study and naturally occurring partnership schools varied in both its focus and its features. However, there were commonalities, too. Across partnerships, professional development frequently focused on writing to learn, teaching writing processes, building teacher community, and engaging teachers as writers. These foci appeared to differ from the foci of professional development offered at delayed partnership schools.

As for the features of the professional development, partnerships exhibited markers of effective professional development to varying degrees. Nearly all showed a content focus, with professional development focused on writing and how students learn to write. While not all partnerships engaged teachers in active professional development, the number of hours spent on classroom-embedded work increased markedly in 2009–10. Finally, by aligning professional development at least to some extent with the state and local context as well as with prior professional development and teachers' goals, many partnerships worked to make the professional development coherent for teachers. The next chapter discusses how the amount and type of professional development teachers received influenced their classroom practices and their communities of practice.



## Chapter 6. Effects on Teachers' Professional Practices

In Chapter 4, we described teachers' participation in writing professional development, noting that while partnerships increased teacher participation in writing professional development (in comparison to delayed partnership schools), there was substantial variation in professional development within and across partnerships. In Chapter 5, we reported that partnership professional development had many characteristics of effective professional development and that the content varied across partnerships. These findings lay the groundwork for a preliminary investigation of our overarching hypothesis: teachers who receive sufficient, high-quality professional development will change practices related to the content of that professional development. Further, changes are more likely if a critical mass of teachers in a school participates, because collective participation enhances the impact of the program on individuals. We explore this hypothesis by addressing three main questions:

1. What are the effects of partnership professional development on teachers' perceived influence of professional development?
2. What are the effects of partnership professional development on teachers' instructional practices?
3. What are the effects of partnership professional development on the professional communities in schools?

In this chapter, we use data from the teacher survey, analysis of teacher assignments, and interviews to address these questions.<sup>26</sup> Each section starts with findings from experimental comparisons between partnership and delayed partnership schools. Findings from other types of quantitative and qualitative analyses are then used to confirm, explain, and deepen our understanding of the experimental findings. Given that the study is not yet complete, all findings should be seen as preliminary. In the final year of the study, we will extend our hypotheses and research questions to encompass student outcomes, reporting on findings from analyses of student work in response to teacher assignments and on-demand writing prompts administered in seventh- and eighth-grade classrooms.

### Teachers' Perceived Influence of Professional Development

The ability of professional development to change teacher practice is shaped by teachers' existing practices and perceptions, which are themselves shaped by instructional context and prior experiences (among other factors). One indicator of teachers' receptivity to professional development and their perceptions of its quality is the extent to which teachers report that professional development influences their practice. Below we compare teachers' perceptions about the effects of professional development on practice in partnership and delayed partnership schools based on teacher surveys and describe teachers' perceptions in partnership schools from interviews.

#### **Partnership professional development has had a positive impact on teachers' perceptions of the influence of professional development on their writing instruction.**

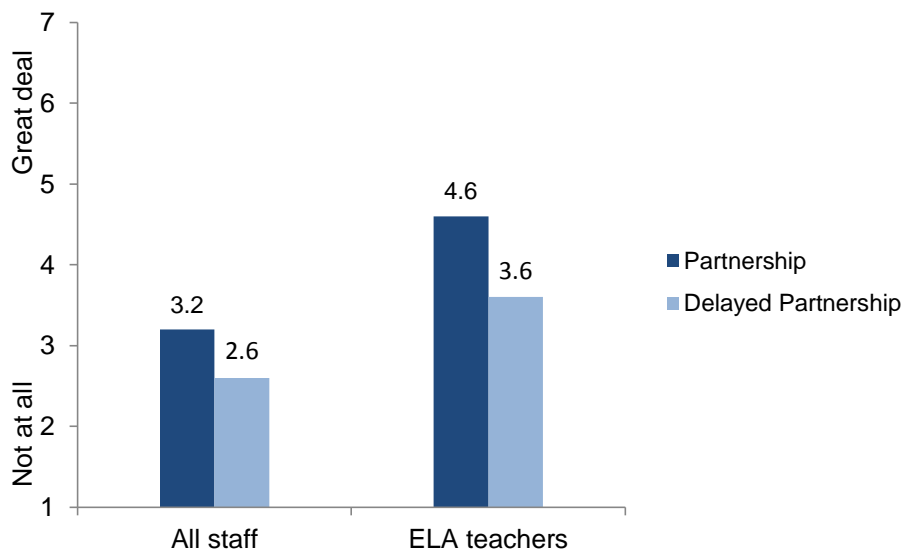
The survey asked teachers who provide writing instruction to indicate the extent to which professional development activities during the current year influenced the writing instruction they provided to their students on a 1 ("Not at all") to 7 ("A great deal") scale. As Exhibit 6-1 shows, teachers in partnership schools reported that professional development influenced their writing instruction to a greater extent than their counterparts in delayed partnership schools. In both partnership and delayed partnership schools, ELA

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<sup>26</sup> In addition, seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers completed logs tracking their instructional practice. Because the findings based on measures from the teacher log parallel those reported here, we have chosen to present the findings only in Appendix C.

teachers reported that professional development influenced their writing instruction to a greater extent than non-ELA teachers.

**Exhibit 6-1**  
**Extent to Which Professional Development Influenced Writing Instruction,  
Among Teachers Who Provide Writing Instruction**



Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

Interview data reveal that most teachers who participated regularly in partnership professional development reported attempting to implement at least some of the ideas or activities presented by their Local Writing Project site. One teacher explained, “[It] seems like every meeting we’ve had, I’ve been able to take at least something and implement it right away in my classroom, which is what I like.” The scope of these reported changes ranged from implementation of specific activities, to the introduction of new instructional procedures, to fundamental changes in instructional approaches. Some teachers reported implementing specific strategies or tools taught in partnership professional development, including “quick writes” to get the juices flowing in early stages of an assignment or “exit slips,” where students write to reflect at the close of a class period or activity. Other teachers reported implementing procedures or processes for organizing instruction, such as assigning more writing than is graded, which enables teachers to manage their workload when they assign writing frequently; using “Go to” sheets, a single page for each assignment that tells students the learning objective, assignment task, and grading rubric; or allowing students more choice of writing topics to build students’ ownership of their writing. Finally, some teachers reported making major changes. One teacher, for example, reported supporting students in longer assignments through modeling her own writing processes, as opposed to just *assigning* writing. This practice represents a substantial change in her overall pedagogical approach as a result of partnership professional development.

Interview data also suggest that the same professional development events can influence teachers within the same school to varying extents. As one teacher-consultant said, describing teachers’ reactions to the same professional development, “I almost see three levels [of implementation]—[1] way interest[ed], [2] ‘Okay, I need to know more because I’m really new at that,’ and [3] maybe a couple are ‘uh, oh wow.’” Another teacher-consultant corroborated this assessment of implementation, noting, “I think some teachers are taking every single thing we do and trying them. Because [the teachers] have examples of things they’ve done [that were covered in the professional development]... [In contrast] we think that there [are] probably some teachers there who are nodding their heads and then turning around and doing exactly what they’ve always done.” These reports suggest that teacher interest in partnership professional development and their

implementation of ideas learned through partnership work varied within schools. Looking across partnerships, the variation appeared to be due to a variety of factors, including teaching assignment and personal interest in changing writing instruction in ways aligned with the professional development.

## **Teachers' Instructional Practices**

In this section we present three types of analyses on the influence of partnership professional development on teachers' instructional practices. First, we present findings from experimental comparisons between teachers in partnership and delayed partnership schools based on teacher surveys and analysis of teacher assignments. Based on prior research (e.g., Desimone, 2009) suggesting that those who participate in more professional development experience greater impacts and our data showing that participation varied within and across partnerships (see Chapter 4), our second step is to examine changes over time only for those who have participated at the most "intense" levels of partnership professional development. It is important to recognize that teachers were not randomly selected into this group and, in many but not all cases, volunteered to participate in this higher level of professional development. Thus, any changes in this subgroup of participants do not generalize to all teachers in partnership schools and cannot be causally linked to the intensity of participation. Finally, we use interview data to give us a clearer picture of particular practices that were reportedly affected by partnership professional development.

Our hypothesis is that outcomes related to high-frequency content are more likely to change than outcomes related to less frequently covered content. Thus, we first present outcomes that were targeted in partnership professional development, namely writing to learn and writing processes. We then present findings on two outcomes that were less frequently the subject of partnership work but which we originally hypothesized might be improved through partnership work, namely instructional planning and the range of genres in which teachers provide instruction. We report in detail on this subset of four aspects of teachers' instructional practice in order to illustrate our key findings; we present the results of the remaining analyses, which corroborate the findings presented here, in Appendix C.

### **Writing to Learn**

Writing to learn describes a broad range of instructional activities that share a common goal: students will use writing as a tool for learning. As described in Chapter 5, partnerships focused professional development on writing to learn more frequently than on other areas. One type of writing to learn activity covered in partnership professional development was having students take a few minutes at some point during a lesson to reflect on what they are learning.

### **Partnership professional development has had a positive impact on the frequency with which ELA teachers reported having students write to reflect.**

Writing to reflect fits within the broader category of "writing to learn." Writing-to-reflect activities do not focus on having students improve specific writing skills (e.g., organization, style, voice, grammar, etc.) or revise writing. Instead, the key goals of reflective writing are to have students write frequently for the purposes of reinforcing learning and supporting metacognition.

Our survey asked teachers about the frequency with which they assigned students to write for a range of purposes. Many of these purposes related to established genres (e.g., persuasive writing is writing to persuade) but some purposes fell outside of the standard lists of genres in which teachers provide instruction. More specifically, our survey asked about the frequency (from "Never" to "Daily") with which students in the target class<sup>27</sup> engaged in writing to reflect on an experience or topic.<sup>28</sup> ELA teachers in partnership schools

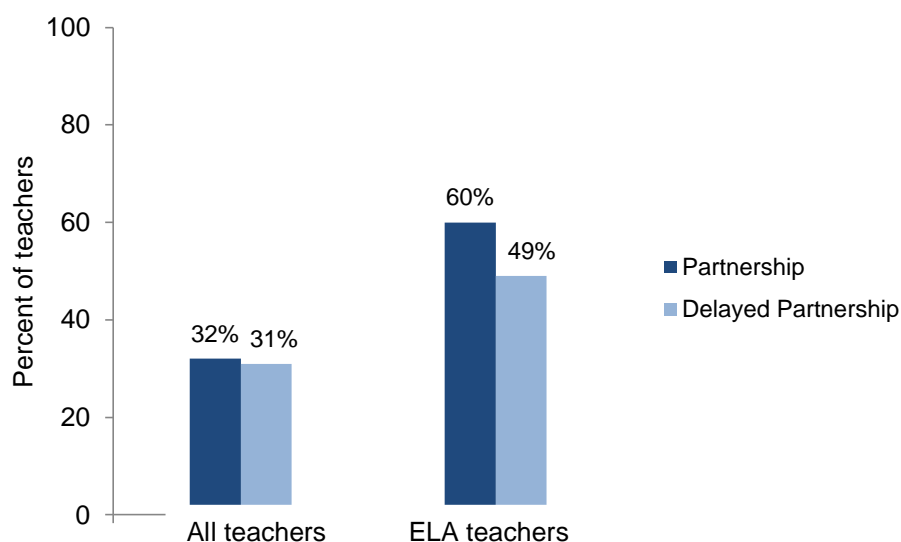
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<sup>27</sup> Seventh and eighth grade ELA teachers reported on the "target class." Other teachers reported on the first class taught that week in their primary teaching assignment.

<sup>28</sup> Findings about the frequency that students were assigned to write for other purposes are presented in Appendix C.

were more likely than those in delayed partnership schools to have students engage in writing to reflect on an experience or topic at least weekly, as shown in Exhibit 6-2. There was no statistically significant difference between responses of teachers at large from partnership versus delayed partnership schools.

**Exhibit 6-2**  
**Percentage of Teachers Reporting That Students Are Engaged in Writing to Reflect on an Experience or Topic at Least Weekly**



Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

Note: The difference between the percentages for all staff in partnership versus delayed partnership schools is not statistically significant. For further information, see Exhibit C-6.3 in Appendix C.

We also examined the responses of the subset of teachers who had received 60 or more hours of partnership professional development in the first 2 years of partnership implementation (2008–09 and 2009–10). Not surprisingly, we found that over time this subgroup of teachers increasingly reported having students write to reflect at least weekly (data reported in Appendix C).

Qualitative data support the finding that the frequency of reflective writing has increased due to partnerships, with some ELA and non-ELA teachers alike implementing writing-to-learn activities. In interviews, teachers described using reflective journals, “daybooks,” or exit slips as regular procedures in their classes. One assistant principal described what she had observed:

I’ve seen more opportunities where kids are actually writing and reflecting. We did a big session on reflecting in this last institute [summer workshop]...Through that daybooking session, several of our math teachers are doing [reflective journals] in their classes right now. And of course it’s not perfect, but at least they are attempting to do something with what they learned in that session and they have to tweak it for their particular classrooms.

Many teachers responded that it was relatively easy to implement these types of activities, perhaps because they were applicable across content areas and did not require a major reorganization of curriculum or drastic revision to the use of instructional time.



## **There is currently limited evidence of partnerships' impacts on the extent to which teacher assignments required students to construct new knowledge.**

We asked teachers to collect and submit assignments that represented their “best opportunity to teach and assess student writing skills” in each grading period. More rigorous assignments require students to construct knowledge, challenging them to move beyond the mere reproduction of information they have been exposed to. Tasks that emphasize construction of knowledge require students to do more than summarize or paraphrase information they have read, heard, or viewed; these tasks require students to generate or explore new ideas through interpretation, analysis, synthesis, or evaluation of information (Matsumura et al., 2002; Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001; Shkolnik et al., 2007). Examples of rigorous tasks include posing and supporting an historical argument or conducting a literary analysis. Using a rubric adapted by the study team, teacher-scorers judged each expository assignment on the extent to which the assignment task required students to construct knowledge through their written responses. The expository assignments received scores from 1 to 3 with a score point of 1 indicating that students can satisfy all or most of the requirements of the assignment task by simply reproducing information they have read, heard, or viewed. A score of 3 indicates that the dominant expectation of the assignment calls for students to go beyond mere reproduction of information and to generate and explore ideas through interpretation, analysis, synthesis, and/or the evaluation of information.<sup>29</sup> By the end of the second year of implementation, there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups in the extent to which teacher assignments required students to construct knowledge.

Interview data suggest that partnership work in some schools led to an increase in writing as a strategy for supporting students' construction of knowledge. For example, the district instructional coach involved in one partnership reported that teachers were using writing as a tool for thinking: “Looking at the way that they view writing in this building now, they truly, I can say with confidence...this year more than any other year, are viewing it as a tool for thinking, and I think that's where that buy-in from all the teachers [comes from].”

In next year's report, we will see whether these patterns around the construction of knowledge in student writing hold up and attain statistical significance.

### **Writing Processes in Instruction**

The National Writing Project is often associated with the idea that writing instruction should incorporate a range of processes that are often part of authentic writing (Lieberman & Wood, 2003). Many Local Writing Project sites reported that work on writing processes was a focus of partnership professional development. Additionally, by engaging teachers as writers, another common focus of partnership professional development, many partnerships ensured teachers experienced various writing processes themselves. As a result, we would hypothesize that partnerships have an impact on the use of writing processes in instruction.

In this study, we measured the extent to which several writing processes—including prewriting, use of models of writing, composing, collaborating with peers, revising, and editing—were incorporated into instruction (for a full list, see Appendix C). We created two scales from survey data, one on the frequency with which students were engaged in writing processes in class and the other on the frequency with which teachers assigned writing processes. We also analyzed teacher assignments to examine how much attention teachers gave in assignments to writing processes.

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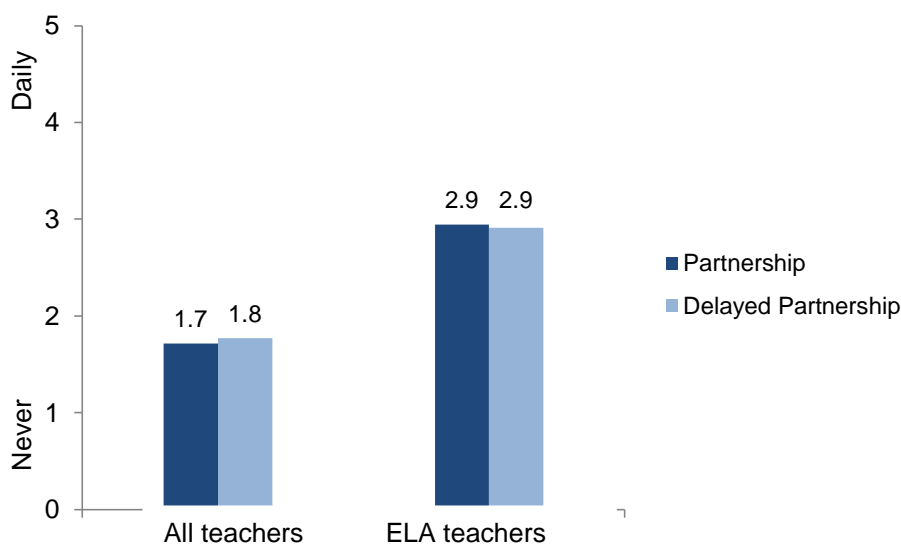
<sup>29</sup> The rubric also includes a *stretch* score point of 4 that indicates an assignment that involves two stages of knowledge construction with the first construction stimulating an additional related knowledge construction. No assignments received a score of 4.

To date, there is limited evidence of partnerships’ impacts on the frequency of student engagement in writing processes or the frequency of writing processes in instruction. On the other hand, partnerships had an impact on one of the writing process goals manifested in teacher assignments, as well as the frequency with which teachers shared their own unfinished writing with students.

Using the teacher survey, we created a scale to describe student engagement in writing processes. The scale is based on a survey item that asked teachers how frequently (from “Never” [0] to “Daily” [5]) students engaged in a range of writing processes during class: brainstorming, composing, revising, editing, receiving individual feedback from the teacher, reviewing written feedback from a teacher, reflecting on or evaluating their own writing, sharing their writing with peers, and analyzing models of writing.<sup>30</sup> As Exhibit 6-3 shows, there was no significant difference between partnership and delayed partnership schools in the responses of all teachers or of ELA teachers. Not surprisingly, in both partnership and delayed partnership schools, students had more opportunities to engage in writing processes in ELA classes than in non-ELA classes.

The results from the analysis of the scale created from the teacher survey on the frequency with which teachers assign writing processes was similar, with no differences between partnership and delayed partnership schools. (Full results are reported in Appendix C.) Aside from teacher-reported instructional practices from the survey, teacher assignments also provide a lens into how teachers organize opportunities for students to engage in and practice process-related writing skills.

**Exhibit 6-3**  
**Student Engagement in Writing Processes**



Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

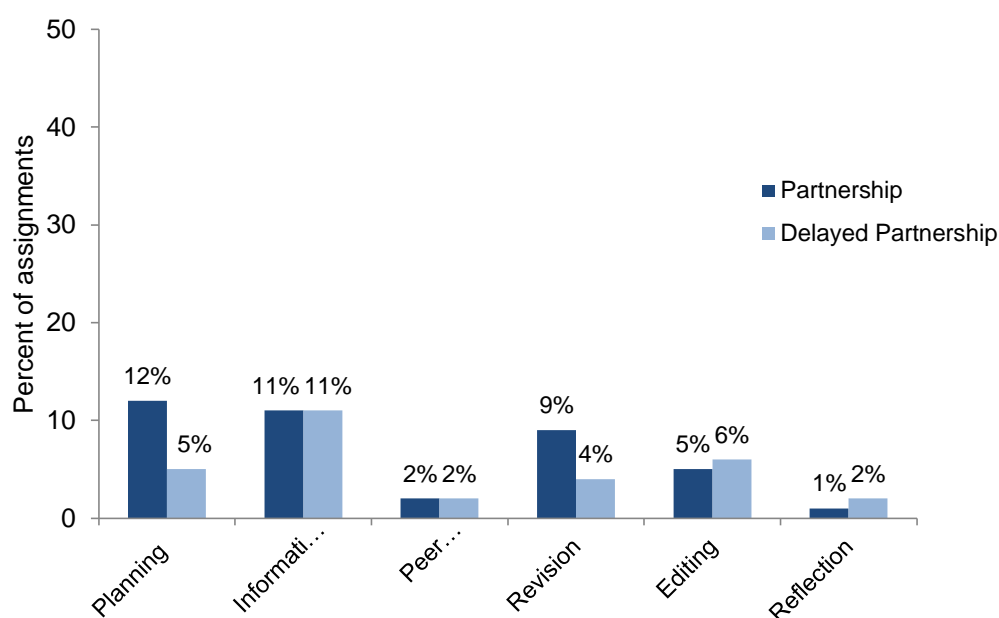
Note: The differences reported in this graph are not statistically significant. For further information, see Exhibit C-6.6 in Appendix C.

The types of opportunities students have to develop and learn writing skills and concepts through assignments are indicated by the specific writing goals teachers have for each assignment. For each assignment submitted, teachers were asked to record the skills, concepts, and content knowledge they hoped

<sup>30</sup> Unlike some other items on the survey, only teachers responded to these items as the questions were inappropriate for staff who did not have a teaching assignment.

students would learn in completing the assignment. Scorers then categorized teachers' descriptions of goals with respect to how much attention teachers gave in assignments to articulating rhetorical purposes and decisions, to structure, to conventions, and to writing processes. Exhibit 6-4 shows the frequencies of the various writing process goals reported by teachers in the partnership and delayed partnership schools for the second year of partnership implementation. While there are no statistically significant differences between teachers at partnership and delayed partnership schools in the majority of these measures, teachers in partnership schools are more likely than teachers in delayed partnership schools to report that one of the intended goals of their assignments was to provide students with opportunities to practice planning skills in the crafting of writing products.

**Exhibit 6-4**  
**Percentage of Teacher Assignments Containing Writing Process Goals,**  
**Among Seventh- and Eighth-Grade ELA Teachers**



Source: 2009–10 teacher assignments.

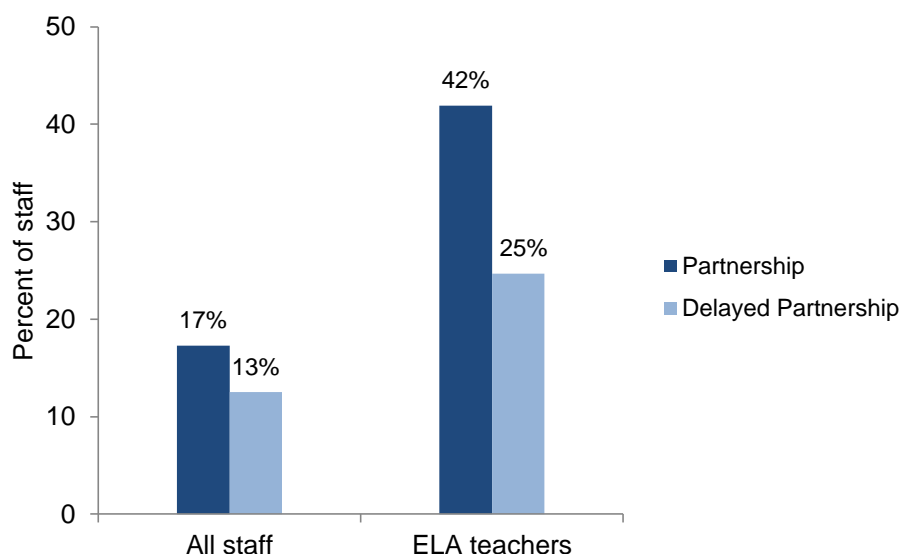
Note: The differences reported above between teacher assignments at partnership versus delayed partnership schools are statistically significant only for the “planning” category. For further information, see Exhibit C-6.8 in Appendix C.

Because teachers in partnership schools varied in the amount of partnership professional development they received, one hypothesis for the few differences between partnership and delayed partnership schools is that too few teachers receive a sufficient duration of professional development for our measures to detect an impact. To explore this hypothesis, we compared “intense” participants’ responses to the survey scale on student engagement in writing over time. We did not find a trend in intense participants’ reports on student engagement in the writing process (see Appendix C). This pattern was robust when we examined teachers who had participated in the ISI as well, and when we examined the survey item on the frequency of teachers assigning writing processes. These data suggest that the lack of difference between partnership and delayed partnership schools on the frequency of writing processes in instruction (as measured by the teacher survey and analysis of teacher assignments) is not because teachers are receiving an insufficient amount of professional development.

Finally, one aspect of using writing processes in instruction that was covered in the professional development in many partnerships was the use of models (see Chapter 5 for description of the professional development).

As Chapter 5 described, partnership professional development often showed teachers how to model their own writing processes for students by sharing pieces of their own unfinished writing with students or writing in front of students. Our survey asked staff to report the frequency (from “Not at all” to “More than 10 times”) with which they shared unfinished and finished writing with their students in the past month. As Exhibit 6-5 shows, teachers in partnership schools were more likely to report that they shared unfinished writing with their students more than once in the past month than their counterparts in delayed partnership schools. On the other hand, there is no statistically significant difference between partnership and delayed partnership teachers in their reported frequency of sharing finished writing with students (see Appendix C).

**Exhibit 6-5**  
**Percentage of Staff Reporting Sharing Unfinished Writing with Students**  
**More than Once in the Past Month**



Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

Interviews with teacher consultants, site directors, and participating teachers, and observations of professional development and instruction corroborate these findings. Some partnership professional development encouraged teachers to model their own writing processes for students, which often involved writing publicly and sharing unfinished writing with students. Sharing finished writing was not as prevalent in the professional development. Interview and observation data in turn provided evidence of teachers sharing their own writing with students, frequently by writing on a document projector or overhead during class as a model for how students might approach a given writing assignment or issue in writing. One teacher, who received an “intense” level of professional development, described how and why she modeled several aspects of the writing process for her students as a core instructional strategy:

I think having them watch me struggle with the same thing, so I use going through where we make the list—10 best things, 10 worst things, or 10 good things or 10 bad things. And then, okay I think I want to write on this. Well I’m not sure what I could write. I don’t know if there’s something in it, and so having them watch me walk through as I articulate what I’m thinking and doing as I go through, this seems like that’s helped a lot. I mean I knew that before in terms of teaching social studies about how to take notes, and how to understand and interpret text, but I wasn’t very good about doing that same sort of thing with writing and maybe because I was feeling pretty insecure with it. And so now I don’t feel quite as insecure...[T]hat has been a huge, huge change in my writing instruction that, where I do that same, I do the activity with them at the same time and model it for

them so that they know that it's not just something that's really easy and slick and that it's kind of messy and you have to work on it.

The finding that partnership professional development led to an increase in the use of teachers' own unfinished writing as a model for students is supported by both quantitative and qualitative data.

Our current qualitative data do not enable us to provide supporting evidence for any hypotheses about why we found no impacts on our scales designed to measure a range of writing processes in instruction. Qualitative data suggest that writing processes were a focus of professional development in many partnerships and some teachers were implementing this aspect of partnership professional development. Additionally, some other measures of writing processes in instruction (assignments that require planning and teachers sharing unfinished writing with students) provided some quantitative evidence of impacts on teachers' writing instruction. In the final year of the study, we will investigate this further. We turn now to two constructs, instructional planning and the range of genres that we hypothesized might be affected by partnership professional development when we designed data collection instruments prior to partnership formation. In contrast to writing to learn and writing processes, however, partnership professional development tended not to address these topics.

### **Instructional Practices Not Covered in Partnership Professional Development**

Based on recent research on effective professional development, we hypothesized from the inception of the study (prior to partnerships establishing the goals for their work) that partnership professional development could potentially have an impact on instructional planning and the range of genres in which teachers provide in instruction. According to research on high-quality teacher assignments, effective writing assignments should manifest the teachers' intended learning goals in the design of the assignment task (Shkolnik et al., 2007). Such alignment is believed to increase teachers' ability to monitor students' progress towards developing core skills and concepts and adjust instruction accordingly. We also hypothesized that partnerships might lead to changes in the range of genres teachers assigned as teachers moved away from teaching focused on tested genres to building students' skills in writing in ways that improve student writing across genres (as described in Fancsali, Nelsestuen, & Weinbaum, 2002, cited in National Writing Project & Nagin, 2003).

### **There is currently limited evidence of partnerships' impact on the extent of alignment between stated goals and instructional tasks or the range of genres teachers provide.**

Through teacher assignments, we measured one aspect of instructional planning, the alignment between stated goals and assigned task. Using survey items, we created scales for genres more likely to be assigned in ELA classes and those more likely to be assigned across content areas. (See Appendix C for detailed descriptions of these measures.) We did not find significant differences between partnership and delayed partnership schools on these two measures. To contextualize the results, it is important to recall the content of professional development provided in partnerships. No Local Writing Project sites or participating teachers reported that partnership professional development focused on the alignment of stated instructional goals and assigned tasks, and few partnerships focused on expanding the range of genres taught. The results suggest that partnerships did not improve teacher skills in areas not addressed by professional development.

### **Collegiality and Professional Community**

The final research question of this chapter focuses on the impact of partnerships on the professional community in schools. As we described in Chapter 5, many partnerships focused their work on improving the professional community in schools. We hypothesize that collegiality on instruction contributes to improved teacher knowledge and teacher practice in writing because teachers can learn and spread ideas from their work together. In addition to supporting increases in collegial interactions in schools, some partnerships

attempted to develop teacher leadership in partnership schools (described in Chapters 4 and 5). One of the main strategies for doing so involved recruiting teachers for the ISI.

### **Collegiality on Instruction**

As an important indicator of collegiality, talk about instructional matters among colleagues can support improvements in teaching practice, especially when that talk is anchored in discussions of student work, lesson plans, and other artifacts of instruction (Horn & Little, 2010; Little & Curry, 2008). When teachers have access to an external partner whose role is to facilitate improvements in a particular subject area, talk among colleagues about instructional matters can increase (Coburn & Russell, 2008). Thus, Local Writing Project partnerships could be expected to increase collegial interactions on matters related to writing in ways that could ultimately lead to changes in instructional practice.

### **Partnership professional development has had a positive impact on discussions about writing instruction and the extent to which teachers are influenced by their colleagues' opinions.**

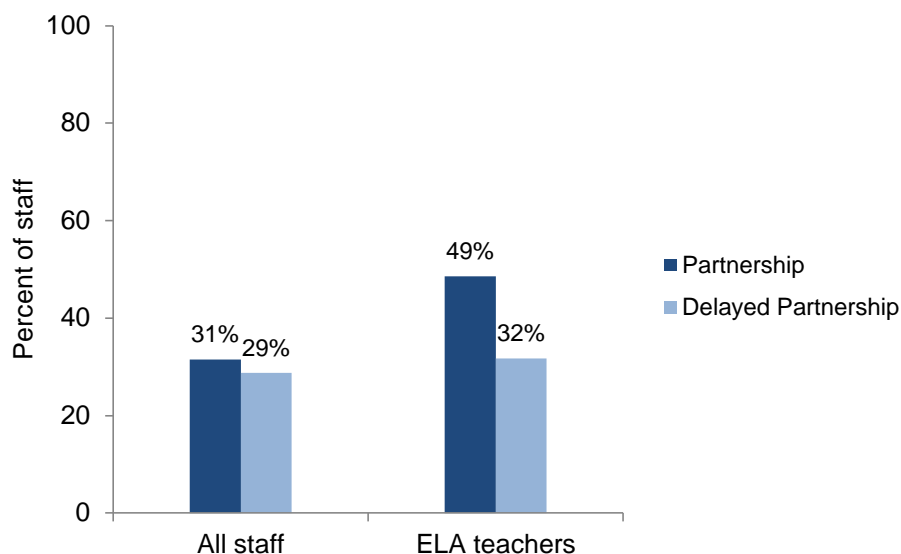
The teacher survey asked teachers to describe the frequency (from “Never” to “Weekly”) with which they discussed (1) lessons or activities they are using to teach writing, (2) samples of student writing, and (3) providing feedback to students on their writing during cross-grade and grade-level meetings. While we did not find significant effects on most of these measures, we did find that ELA teachers in partnership schools are more likely than those in delayed partnership schools to report discussing lessons or activities for teaching writing in grade-level meetings at least once a month (see Exhibit 6-6).<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, the majority of ELA teachers, even in partnership schools, did not report talking about writing instruction in grade-level meetings at least once per month. This finding suggests that even while partnerships were increasing ELA teachers' talk with colleagues about writing instruction, formal school meetings provided infrequent opportunities to coordinate writing instruction and improve teachers' professional practices.

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<sup>31</sup> In addition, we found with marginal statistical significance that all staff and ELA teachers in partnership schools are more likely than those in delayed partnership schools to report discussing lessons or activities for teaching writing in cross-grade meetings at least monthly. Although not significant alone, these data support the finding that partnership professional development has had a positive impact on discussions about writing instruction.

**Exhibit 6-6**  
**Percentage of Staff Discussing Lessons or Activities for Teaching Writing**  
**at Least Monthly in Grade-Level Meetings**



Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

Note: The difference between the percentages for all staff in partnership versus delayed partnership schools is not statistically significant. For further information, see Exhibit C-6.14 in Appendix C.

Teachers reported that in both grade-level and departmental meetings, talking about writing instruction provided an opportunity to establish common goals and approaches to instruction. In some instances, this time also created space for teachers to receive feedback from external teacher consultants who were supporting the school. For example, in one partnership the professional development helped the ELA department learn how to use meeting time to talk about instruction and analyze student work. The Local Writing Project site facilitated a weekly workshop with the same teachers during department meetings and also led an after school “genre study” focused on helping students prepare answers to constructed response questions on standardized tests. The teachers shared strategies related to questioning, note taking, and converting notes into answers. In another partnership, the professional development led to some vertical articulation of the curriculum across the middle grades. One teacher described the benefits of talking with colleagues about writing instruction as follows:

[N]ow there’s common language between the different grade levels, it has helped [students] out a lot. And it’s helped me; when I was teaching text features for the project that we’re working on now...I knew exactly the assignment that they’d worked on to work on text features and I was able to look at them and say, ‘Okay, remember last year when you did the article on gorillas,’ and they’re like, ‘Oh yeah!’ And I said, ‘Do you remember going through and having to find captions and you had to go through and find, and they’re all, ‘Oh yeah, yeah!’ And I said, ‘Okay, now you’re going to take that and apply it to what we’re doing, now you’re going to be the one writing those things.’

In another partnership, the teacher-consultant played a critical role in assisting the school’s professional learning community in engaging teachers in deeper conversations about goals for writing instruction, curriculum, and posing questions of one another about their practice. In addition, in this school, a district leader explained that the Local Writing Project site brought together teachers from different departments to coordinate on instructional matters:

I had a science teacher [who has] always done this looking at cells under a microscope lesson...and the kids have always drawn the different things they’ve seen. This year he had them explain in writing

what they've seen... It was really interesting because that was the quarter they were doing... descriptive writing in their writing class, so the way the kids described it, it was beautiful. And now that's bringing the science and the writing teacher together to say, 'Gee, when are you doing this, I'll design this lab during that time. And when I'm going to compare and contrast, that would be a good time for you to do this.' So now they're beginning to see the connections across their curriculum.

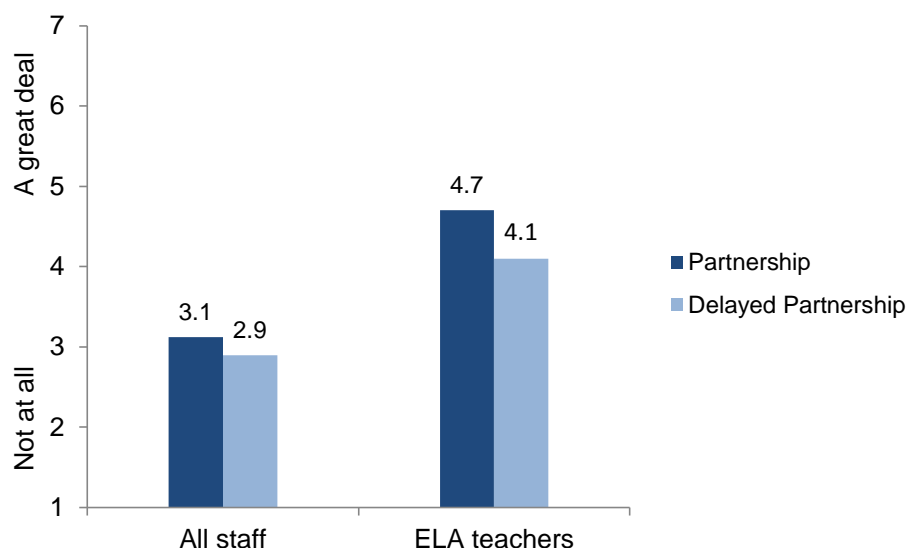
In sum, writing was becoming more of a focus within meetings of faculty teams in partnership schools, relative to delayed partnership schools, but this focus was not particularly intensive. The tools and expertise brought by the Local Writing Project sites facilitated some of the additional talk, as did teachers' own growing interest in writing instruction.

**Partnership professional development has had a positive impact on the extent to which teachers are influenced by their colleague's opinions.**

Possibly as a result of more conversation between ELA teachers about teaching writing in partnership schools versus delayed partnership schools, ELA teachers in partnership schools were also more likely to be influenced by each other's writing instruction than their counterparts in delayed partnership schools. Our survey asked teachers who provide writing instruction to indicate the extent to which their colleagues' opinions about the strength of particular strategies for teaching writing influenced the writing instruction they provided to their students on a 1 ("Not at all") to 7 ("A great deal") scale. As Exhibit 6-7 shows, ELA teachers in partnership schools reported that their colleagues' opinions influenced their writing instruction to a greater extent than their counterparts in delayed partnership schools. In both partnership and delayed partnership schools, ELA teachers reported that their colleagues' opinions influenced their writing instruction to a greater extent than non-ELA teachers. The result is the same when we examined the percentage of teachers who indicated that their colleagues' opinions did influence their writing instruction to a relatively greater extent (see Appendix C).



**Exhibit 6-7**  
**Extent to Which Colleagues' Opinions Influence Writing Instruction,**  
**Among Teachers Who Provide Writing Instruction**



Source: 2009–10 teacher survey.

Note: The difference between the rates for all staff in partnership versus delayed partnership schools is not statistically significant. For further information, see Exhibit C-6.15 in Appendix C.

**In partnership schools, duration of professional development is related to help in writing among colleagues, and help in writing from colleagues with a significant amount of professional development is related to improved instructional practices.**

Analyses of the effects of writing professional development on teachers' self-reports of interactions with specific colleagues show that in partnership schools where more teachers received professional development of a longer duration (at least 60 hours in Years 1 and 2), teachers reported receiving help in writing from a larger number of teachers. For a hypothetical school with 20 teachers who received 10 hours more of professional development out of a faculty of 50, there would have been 2 or 3 additional teachers in this school being helped by these 20 participants. (See Appendix B for an explanation of the social network methodology used for these analyses.)

Beyond effects on collegial interactions, analyses of the social network data from the teacher survey show that teachers who received help from colleagues who received a significant amount of professional development (at least 30 hours in Years 1 and 2) increased the frequency with which they taught writing processes and exposed students to a breadth of written genres in instruction. Notably, these effects on teachers' self-reported practice were above and beyond direct effects of their own participation in writing professional development and were similar in magnitude to those direct effects. We call this a *mediated* effect of professional development, because teachers' learning for changing their own practice is mediated by their colleagues' acquisition of knowledge and skill from professional development.

In some schools, partnerships aimed to increase their impact by encouraging just this kind of mediated learning. Much as the model for the ISI encourages teachers to share what they have learned from others, some partnership teachers who went through an ISI report doing so in their school:

[I]n the same sense, when we do content meetings...you end up often sharing a lot of the ideas there. Like we're in the middle of the writing unit...I was telling the whole seventh grade about how I

taught the reviews, and that came from the [ISI], like...using the different models...I looked up a bunch of movie reviews and we look at them and break down the structure...instead of them just writing the review and grading it...So [the Writing Project] comes up probably a lot for those of us who have been in the course because it's part of what we do in the classroom now, but it's never like, 'this is a Writing Project idea that I'm going to tell you right now.'

Though promising, this set of findings related to the influence of colleagues needs to be situated within the larger contexts of partnership schools. Writing was a topic at meetings in partnership schools on average about once per month, and a few teachers in partnership schools reported limited collaboration among faculty and even some disagreements about the value of the collaborative structures that were in place at their school. Additionally, relative to other influences on teaching, such as accountability and curriculum materials, colleagues were not as strong an influence on teachers' practices. Finally, in interpreting this finding it is important to recognize the correlational, rather than causal, nature of the investigation, because we cannot exclude the alternative explanation that the estimated effect is because teachers who have the potential to improve their instructional practices tend to interact with colleagues who receive a significant amount of professional development.

### **Teacher Leadership**

As described in Chapters 4 and 5, some partnerships had an explicit focus on building teacher leadership. Site directors in several partnerships reported recruiting teachers in partnership schools to attend the ISI as a strategy for building support for the partnership by expanding teacher leadership of the partnership.

### **Participants in the ISI took on varied roles in their partnership schools subsequent to their ISI participation.**

When examining the effects that the ISI had on participants, we see that most participants reported one or more of the following effects: improved instruction, entry into the Local Writing Project site's professional community, and increased leadership roles in their partnerships. For some, the main effect of the ISI seemed to be on their own instructional practice. One ISI participant reported the following:

[The ISI has] really changed the way I look at teaching writing and even just teaching language arts in general. I used to...pick the pieces and then figure okay, what can we write from them. Now I sort of do it the opposite way. If I want to have them write this, how will the things that we read support writing that?... I have them write so much more than I used to have them write just to give them all the experience of writing for different purposes and not worrying about taking every piece of writing all the way through the writing process. [I] emphasize sharing more than I used to...Really focusing on mentor text and really zeroing in on one or two...craft lessons as preparation for writing. It just...gave me really a whole structure of how...I want to teach writing.

Although participants varied in the extent to which they reported the ISI changed their instructional practices, no particular participant characteristics seemed to be consistently related to this outcome.

Some participants in the ISI began to join the Local Writing Project site's professional community. It is difficult to disentangle the characteristics of partnerships and individuals related to this outcome because it came about differently in each partnership. For example, one Local Writing Project site invited teachers to attend the annual national conference and a regional conference.<sup>32</sup> Another teacher experienced expanded leadership roles outside of his school, developing and presenting professional development for the Local Writing Project site at other schools in the service area. In a third partnership, a teacher completed the ISI and then left the partnership school for another school in the district. This teacher continued to work on the

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<sup>32</sup> Neither the Local Writing Project site nor the participating teachers saw these as opportunities to strengthen teachers' leadership within the partnership school; rather, they saw it as an opportunity to build the Local Writing Project site's cadre of teacher-consultants.

partnership in her former school as a teacher-consultant. The ISI outcome of teachers joining their Local Writing Project site's professional community was less frequent than the other outcomes described. However, this outcome could become more common over time as Local Writing Project sites recruit teachers who participated in the ISI and subsequently worked in their partnership schools, to work as teacher-consultants in other schools after their current partnerships end.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, if teachers in partnership schools form connections to the Local Writing Project site, it may help extend the Local Writing Project site's influence in the school after the study ends.

Finally, some participants in the ISI took on increasing leadership roles within their school's partnership. Two main factors, which in some cases appear interrelated, support teachers who complete the ISI in becoming partnership leaders. The first is the characteristics of the teachers themselves, prior to enrolling in the ISI. Teachers within a school vary in both their professional influence and the formal leadership positions they hold. For teachers who were informal or formal leaders in their school prior to attending the ISI, the ISI sometimes catalyzed their leadership, focusing it on partnership work. One example was an ELA department chair who was initially hesitant to attend the ISI and held beliefs about effective writing instruction that contrasted sharply with that of the Local Writing Project site's leaders. ISI participation reportedly transformed her instruction, and she used her role as a department leader to spread a vision of instruction that was aligned with the one espoused by her Local Writing Project site. Additionally, while she was initially hesitant to become a leader in her partnership, she has embraced that role over time, planning and facilitating partnership professional development.

Partnerships can facilitate teachers taking on partnership leadership subsequent to the ISI by establishing formal roles and processes for teacher leaders. Most typically these include roles in planning the partnership or planning and presenting professional development. The partnership that created the largest formal space for teacher leadership was led by a writing committee, composed of the site director, school principal, and teachers in the school who attended either the ISI or an open institute hosted by the Local Writing Project site. This committee set partnership goals and developed a plan for meeting them. Committee members also presented all partnership professional development in the school. The strategy of creating roles for teacher leaders within the partnership did not always succeed, however. In one partnership, the Local Writing Project site asked teachers who had completed the ISI to develop and present a workshop for all teachers at their school. The workshop was poorly received and damaged the way some teachers in the school perceived the partnership. The Local Writing Project site did not ask the teachers who completed the ISI to present any additional partnership professional development that year. It seems that, in this case, the initial skills of the teachers who participated in the ISI and their roles in the school, along with aspects of the partnership's planning process, may have contributed to the lack of success of the professional development.

## Conclusion

Partnership professional development appeared to be impacting teacher professional practice in some areas, such as teacher perceived influence of professional development, writing to learn, and collegiality on instruction. These impacts were seen on survey items and in qualitative data, in areas that are closely connected to the most common content foci of partnership professional development. At this time, there is limited evidence that partnership professional development has had an impact on instructional planning, the range of genres in which students write, or the extent to which writing processes are prevalent in partnership schools. It is not surprising that instructional planning and the range of genres in which students are writing were not impacted by partnership professional development because these topics were rarely a focus of partnership work. However, writing processes were a focus of some partnership work, though fewer partnerships reported it as a focus than writing to learn. Possible reasons for the finding of no or few differences are that, because writing process instruction is familiar to many writing teachers, partnership

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<sup>33</sup> Preliminary data suggest that partnerships varied in the extent to which they had plans for continuing work at the conclusion of the study, but it appeared likely that some partnerships will continue and others will conclude at the end of the evaluation.

professional development might affect the *quality* of writing process instruction but not the *frequency* with which teachers report using these strategies. An alternate explanation is that the changes necessary to implement an instructional program in writing focused on writing processes are more substantial than the changes necessary to insert reflective writing into classrooms through, for example, student journals or exit slips. As a result, more time may be required to see an impact on these measures. Data collection and analysis in the final year of the study will examine these two explanations.

## Chapter 7. Conclusion

The National Writing Project's network of Local Writing Project sites offer a wide range of professional development for K-12 teachers across the United States. School partnerships are one of the mechanisms through which the Local Writing Project sites deliver professional development. The National Writing Project does not have a uniform model for partnership work. Instead, the nature of partnership work is shaped locally, adapted based on the needs of schools and the capacities of Local Writing Project sites. As such, partnerships have the potential to provide an opportunity for teachers to engage in professional development that has many, if not all, of the characteristics of effective professional development (Garet et al., 1999; Desimone, 2009). While all National Writing Project professional development has the potential to have sufficient *duration* and *content focus*, and to be presented using strategies that enable *active learning*, partnerships, because they are situated in schools, are ideally suited for professional development that is *coherent* and in which there is *collective participation*. By adapting the professional development to meet the school needs—considering existing curricula, assessments and accountability, and teachers' past experiences and goals for the future—partnerships can achieve an unusual level of coherence. Moreover, by working with a group of teachers from the same school, partnership professional development enables teachers to develop a common language and set of skills and knowledge that they can share with each other and build upon through future discussions.

In 2009–10, this national evaluation of partnership professional development involved observing (1) the contexts and capacities of the Local Writing Project sites and schools (Chapter 2), (2) how schools and Local Writing Project sites came together to plan their partnerships (Chapter 3), (3) the extent to which the partnerships achieved their potential by delivering high-quality professional development to a critical mass of teachers (Chapters 4 and 5), and (4) early changes in teachers' professional practice (Chapter 6). We summarize our findings below.

- **Local Writing Project Site and School Capacity.** By definition, school partnerships are collaborative ventures between a Local Writing Project site and school, and the context and capacity of each affects their joint work. Local Writing Project sites' capacity to engage in partnership work varied in two important ways: (1) the extent to which their vision for partnership work is rich and multifaceted enough to provide guidance on key aspects of partnership work and (2) the depth of their teacher-consultant pool. Schools' abilities to partner with Local Writing Project sites and benefit from partnership work were affected by leadership, staff stability, norms of collaboration, and curriculum and accountability policies and practices. Where the two partners negotiated their work together and leveraged their strengths, they were able to plan and organize the partnership work, provide contextually relevant professional development, and support teachers in the implementation of new strategies despite limitations in either partner's capacity or challenging school circumstances.
- **Partnership Planning.** Fundamental first steps in partnership planning appeared to be identifying key stakeholders and ensuring that they had time to work together and the resources to support professional development. Across the partnerships, Local Writing Project sites and schools varied in terms of how strategic they were about who they involved in planning. The time set aside for planning also varied and, in several cases, was insufficient. Overall, schools and districts contributed few monetary resources in support of partnership professional development. In some cases, this lack of support limited the scope of partnership professional development.
- Planning processes that were characterized by efforts to diagnose and respond to the school context, balance school goals with site capacity and expertise, and consider prior and future professional development were more likely to result in a plan for high-quality, highly adaptive professional development.
- **Participation in Writing Professional Development.** In examining participation in writing professional development in partnership and delayed partnership schools, we found that teachers in

partnership schools were more likely than teachers in delayed partnership schools to participate in writing professional development. Likewise, for staff who participated in writing professional development, those in partnership schools received more professional development, on average, than those in delayed partnership schools.

Within partnership schools, however, we saw significant variation in the amount of professional development the teachers received, particularly when comparing seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers to the staff as a whole. In general, seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers were much more likely not only to have participated in professional development, but also to have received an “intensive” amount of writing professional development (i.e., at least 60 hours over the 2 years of partnership implementation). Given that ELA teachers have higher participation rates than the staff as a whole on all measures, it may be that change is more likely to come (in many partnerships) within the ELA department as opposed to the school as a whole. Examining whether ELA teachers collectively participated in an “intensive” duration of professional development and whether the partnerships have generated ISI graduates (who could potentially help lead their colleagues in improving writing instruction), we see that partnerships vary in the extent to which they have made inroads into schools.

- **Content and Nature of Professional Development.** One of the basic tenets of the National Writing Project is that there is no single best way of teaching writing and that local communities of practice are best positioned to create writing programs. Therefore, it is not surprising that the professional development provided across study and naturally occurring partnership schools varied in both its content focus and its features. However, there were commonalities, too. Across sites, professional development frequently focused on writing to learn, teaching writing processes, building teacher community, and engaging teachers as writers. These foci differed from the focus of professional development offered at delayed partnership schools.

As for the features of the professional development, partnerships exhibited markers of effective professional development to varying degrees. Nearly all showed a content focus, with professional development focused on writing and how students learn to write. Likewise, the number of hours spent on classroom-embedded work in 2009–10 increased markedly. Finally, by aligning professional development at least to some extent with the state and local context as well as with previous professional development and teachers’ goals, many partnerships worked to make the professional development coherent for teachers.

- **Effects on Teachers’ Professional Practices.** Participation in partnership professional development has uneven effects on teachers. On the one hand, partnership professional development appears to be impacting teachers’ perceptions of the influence of professional development on their practice, the use of writing-to-learn strategies, and collegiality on instruction. Impacts are seen on survey items and in qualitative data, in areas that are closely connected to the most common content foci of partnership professional development. On the other hand, there is limited evidence that partnership professional development has had an impact on instructional planning or the range of genres in which students write, which are not consistently foci of partnership professional development. Additionally, there is limited evidence that partnership professional development has had an impact on the frequency with which writing processes are taught in partnership schools.

Finally, as we embark on the final year of this 4-year evaluation, we reflect on methodological issues that have emerged over the course of the study. To strengthen the causal inferences policymakers could draw from the findings, this evaluation employed a randomized controlled trial (RCT) methodology. Such designs are typically implemented with tightly controlled treatments that have minimal variation, thus leading to clear causal inference about a well-defined treatment. In contrast, the treatment in this evaluation, the National Writing Project partnership model, depends on adaptation to meet local needs. As such, the observed variation is not unexpected. However, it poses a series of challenges when attempting to estimate partnership

effectiveness. First, in an RCT, measuring fidelity of implementation is important for disentangling the extent to which the estimate of the main effect of the intervention is reduced by instances of the intervention failing to meet sufficient levels of implementation. Because of the adaptive nature of the National Writing Project's partnership model, it is difficult to develop a measure of fidelity—or even integrity—that is objective and reliable.

A related challenge is measurement of the main effect. When the treatment is locally determined, researchers need to cast a wide net in terms of measuring possible outcomes. Data presented in this report suggest that some of the outcomes we measured (e.g., the range of genres assigned) are not likely to be influenced by partnership work given the most common content foci of professional development. Likewise, some content foci (e.g., writing to learn) were not anticipated to be as prevalent as they are. As a result, current measures may not fully capture effects in this area.

For the final year of the evaluation, we will focus on writing to learn and writing processes with increased intensity, both in terms of survey items and qualitative data collection. The increased focus on measuring use of writing-to-learn strategies responds to the fact that partnerships focused on this content area to a greater extent than we anticipated at the start of the study. Through increased focus on writing processes, we hope to better understand why we are not detecting effects of professional development on instructional practices in this area. We hope to explore the extent to which measurement challenges and barriers to implementation might explain current findings and to have greater confidence in statements about effects on teachers' use of writing processes in instruction in the final report. Finally, the final report will include measures of student outcomes. For the first time since the baseline year, we will analyze samples of student work collected in tandem with teacher assignments during the third and fourth years of data collection. Additionally, we will analyze the writing students' responses to on-demand writing prompts across all 4 years of data collection.





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## Appendix A. Research Methods

The National Evaluation of Writing Project Professional Development follows an experimental design in which schools assigned to the treatment condition form partnerships with their Local Writing Project site (called partnership schools), and schools assigned to the control condition delay partnership formation until the study concludes in 2011 (called delayed partnership schools). Details of our research design, including constructs to be examined, instrument development, and data collection and analysis plans were presented in our Year 1 report. This appendix describes the data collection methods, response rates, and analyses used in 2009–10. First we discuss the methods used for the study followed by a description of the methods used for the substudy of naturally occurring partnerships.

### Data Collection and Analysis

In this section we discuss the administration and analysis of five data collection instruments: teacher survey, teacher logs, on-demand writing prompts with student reflections, teacher assignments, and student work associated with those assignments. For the five data collection instruments, SRI's data collection is supported by a local site coordinator (LSC) who assists in follow-up and survey administration. Four of the data collection instruments (teacher log, teacher assignment, student work, writing prompt, and reflection) focused exclusively on one target class of seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers, meaning that these data were collected only by these teachers and in only one of their classes. In 2009–10, there were 159 seventh- and eighth-grade teachers eligible to participate in data collection for these four instruments across the 39 schools in the study. Of these, 151 teachers agreed to participate in some or all of these data collection activities. We calculated our response rate for each of these instruments based on our expected sample of the number of teachers who agreed to participate in the study. Response rates for each instrument are listed below. As an incentive to participate in the data collection activities, the seventh- and eighth-grade teachers who agreed to participate were eligible for a stipend of up to \$550; the amount was pro-rated depending on the amount of data that they returned. Following the discussion of the five data collection instruments, we describe our case studies and the quarterly partnership monitoring we did in collaboration with the Local Writing Project sites.

All data collection activities are conducted similarly in partnership and delayed partnership schools with two exceptions. We conduct fewer case study interviews in delayed partnership schools than in partnership schools. Additionally, since quarterly partnership monitoring is information about the partnership collected from the Local Writing Project site, it does not cover delayed partnership schools at all.

#### Teacher Survey

The teacher survey was designed to provide a schoolwide look at how much and what types of writing students do across the content areas, teachers' attitudes and beliefs about writing, their participation in writing professional development, their perception of their professional community, their school context, and their backgrounds.

#### Sample and Response Rates

In spring 2010, we surveyed all certified staff (over 1,800 people) from the 39 schools in the study. Certified staff included anyone who held a credential that would enable them to provide instruction to students including teachers, assistant principals, guidance counselors, instructional coaches, and some librarians. We did not include principals, support staff, or paraprofessionals. Thirty-five schools had response rates of 80% or higher, nine schools had a 100% response rate; the average school response rate was 94%.

#### Administration

Beginning in early spring 2010, researchers contacted each partnership and delayed partnership school to obtain an up-to-date roster of all certified staff. The survey was distributed in hard-copy format to all certified

staff. The data collection window was the 10 weeks from mid-March to late May. Each school determined its own administration plan, often facilitated by the LSC. Upon completion, respondents sealed the survey in an envelope preprinted with their name on the outside and returned it to a coordinator in the school who tracked respondents. The coordinator returned the surveys to SRI and was given a gift card for the additional effort.

### ***Data Preparation and Analysis***

Surveys were stripped of identifying information (other than alphanumeric ID codes) and scanned. The scanning process captured an image that SRI stored in addition to the paper file. Data from each survey were compiled into a data file with a unique identifier for each individual linked to his or her school.

The first analytic step was to run descriptive statistics on survey items to understand how they are manifested in partnership and delayed partnership schools. In addition to original items from the survey, factor analysis and reliability analysis were also conducted to develop scales for the following teacher practices:

1. Staff members' own writing practices
2. The variety of ELA-oriented genres that students use in class writing
3. The variety of content-oriented genres that students use in class writing
4. Class time devoted to four key writing processes
5. Student engagement with writing processes.

Next, analyses were conducted to compare partnership and delayed partnership schools on the survey items and on the constructed factors.

Due to the nested nature of the data (teachers nested within schools), hierarchical modeling was applied to test the differences between partnership and delayed partnership schools on the survey items. For each survey item or factor, a two-level hierarchical model with teacher and school levels was posited, with the survey item or factor as the outcome at the teacher level and partnership identification as a predictor at the school level. The coefficient of the partnership identification indicates the difference between partnership and delayed partnership schools on the survey item or factor, taking the nesting of teachers within schools into consideration. A hierarchical linear model was posited for continuous variables and a hierarchical model with logit link function was used for dichotomous variables with "yes" and "no" answers.

To take the nested nature of data into consideration and to be consistent with the above described testing of difference, hierarchical modeling was also applied to describe the values or proportions of the survey items and factors. For partnership and delayed partnership schools separately, a simple hierarchical model was posited with each survey item or factor as the outcome with no predictors. The estimated intercept represents the value of the partnership or delayed partnership schools on the survey item or factor, taking the nesting of teachers within schools into consideration. For dichotomous items, the intercept from the logit link function is in logits, which is transferred to proportion for interpretation.

### ***Teacher Log***

To acquire more detailed information on ELA teachers' instructional practices, we gathered instructional logs from seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers. The logs asked teachers to describe their learning goals for students, the purposes for which students engaged in writing, collaboration in writing, students' use of models to guide writing, and the amount of time students spent engaged in different aspects of the writing process. The logs were designed using methods piloted in SRI's evaluation of the Gates Foundation schools (Mitchell et al., 2005) and patterned after logs developed by Rowan and his colleagues (Rowan, Camburn, & Correnti, 2004).

### ***Sample and Response Rates***

In 2009–10, there were 147 teachers who returned logs. Across the 39 schools, the average response rate on the teacher log was 96%. Two schools had response rates lower than 80%, and 27 schools had a 100% response rate.

## ***Administration***

In 2009–10, we administered the teacher logs to teachers two times, roughly fall and spring. At each administration, teachers had a 2-week window in which to complete the log. The data collection weeks were determined by SRI, based on the school calendar. Teachers were asked to report on 5 consecutive days of typical instruction, which constituted one booklet of teacher logs. SRI asked teachers to exclude field trips and standardized testing required by the district or the state. The log included two questions about the target class as a whole and the remaining questions focused on a target student, selected by the teacher, who fell within the achievement quartile determined for the teacher by SRI. To mitigate the effects of instructional differentiation for students at different performance levels, SRI asked teachers to focus on one student from one of four performance levels for each log booklet.

## ***Data Preparation and Analysis***

The data preparation process was identical for the teacher log and the teacher survey (described above). Teacher log files were merged with survey data for quantitative analysis. We ran descriptive statistics for the partnership and delayed partnership schools for each item, and then ran comparisons to tests for differences in responses by treatment group.

## ***Teacher Assignments***

Teacher assignments provide us with a lens into how teachers organize opportunities for students to learn how to write. Over the course of the 2009–10 school year, we solicited four assignments from seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers' target classes. Teachers selected assignments that they felt represented students' best opportunity to demonstrate their writing proficiencies. These assignments were then scored at SRI during the summer of 2010.

## ***Sample and Response Rates***

In 2009–10, there were 143 teachers who returned teacher assignments. Across the 39 schools, the average response rate on the teacher assignment was 91%. Four schools had response rates lower than 80%, and 29 schools had a 100% response rate.

## ***Scoring***

A 3-day teacher assignment scoring session was held at SRI International (Menlo Park) on August 2–4, 2010. The scoring of teaching assignments took 2 full days, and the third day was dedicated to the coding of student reflections on their responses to in-class writing prompts (student reflection data is not presented in this report). A total of 622 teacher assignments were scored and 163 (26%) of those were double scored to assess the reliability of the coding process.<sup>35</sup> The training staff consisted of a lead trainer, Carmen Manning (University of Wisconsin, Eau-Claire) and Amy Hafter of SRI. Twelve teacher-scorers were present for the session, 11 of whom were returning from the previous summer's scoring session. Scorers were originally recruited and hired from across the local region, and all of the scorers are active middle school English/language arts teachers. Half of the teachers were recruited through the local National Writing Project network; SRI staff recruited the others. All of the teacher-scorers had previous experience in rubric-based coding of student writing prior to participating in the scoring for this evaluation.

The scoring session began by reminding the teacher-scorers about different aspects of the study—its purpose, design, and the role of the teacher assignment data collection and analysis in the evaluation. Scorers were reminded that they were not evaluating the teachers participating in the study but they were instead coding the assignment for characteristics important to the study. Trainers emphasized to scorers the importance of applying the rubrics according to how they were trained rather than how they think the rubric ought to be

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<sup>35</sup> A random sample of approximately 13% of all papers ( $n = 82$ ) were double scored to establish interrater reliability and another 13% ( $n = 81$ ) to examine evidence of temporal bias due to drift in the training and scoring process from baseline year to Year 2 of partnership implementation. There was no evidence of temporal drift based on a year-to-year comparison of scores for the double scored sample.

applied. Each rubric criterion was then addressed separately. To reach consensus on the reliable application of the rubric, approximately 90 minutes was dedicated to understanding and training on each criterion, using three different sets of anchor and practice papers from the pool of assignments collected for this purpose. Once the trainers were confident that scorers were coding the practice papers with sufficient reliability, the actual scoring process for that criterion was initiated. Batches of assignments with equal numbers of randomly assembled papers were randomly assigned to each of the 12 scorers. Each of the two criteria coded took approximately 2.5 hours to code. The trainers were available throughout the scoring session to answer scorer questions about the rubric and to provide assistance in determining an appropriate score for a particular assignment when asked. In these instances, the final code given to an assignment was the responsibility of the trainer. If a coder felt that a particular assignment could not be coded because it lacked sufficient information, the coder notified the lead trainer, who then reviewed the assignment with the coder and decided its codability.

### ***Establishment of Interrater Reliability (Agreement Rate)***

Scorer agreement rates were computed for each of the two criteria scored. Approximately 13% (n = 82) were independently scored by two different scorers for Criterion 1 and 13% (n = 69) for Criterion 2.<sup>36</sup> For Criterion 1, alignment of intended writing goals with goals manifested in the assignment task, agreement rates were computed for (1) individual dichotomous items used to identify the presence of specific individual goals evident in teachers' reported goals and (2) a 4-point Likert item that required coders to assess the extent to which a teacher's stated goals were manifested in the assignment. The agreement rates for Criterion 1 are shown in Exhibits A-1 and A-2 respectively. In Exhibit A-1, the agreement rates for the dichotomous items were computed for the coding of the presence of each specific goal—Rhetorical Decisions, Structure, Conventions, and Processes. Agreement rates were calculated two different ways: Overall Agreement, which includes agreements when both coders did not indicate the presence of a goal and when they did, and Conditional Agreement, which only considers agreements and nonagreements when at least one of the coders indicated the presence of a goal. Overall agreement rates ranged from 72% to 95%, while conditional rates ranged from 45% to 91%. Exhibit A-2 shows the agreement rates for the 4-point Likert item. Agreement rates are shown for both Perfect Agreement (44%) and Agreement Within 1 Coding Category (75%). The latter is the standard way of reporting agreement rates for coding rubrics of this type. The agreement rates for Criterion 2, Opportunities for Students to Construct Knowledge in their Written Responses to Assignment Tasks, a 4-point Likert item, are presented in Exhibit A-3. The agreement rates for Perfect Agreement and Agreement Within 1 Coding Category were 44% and 83% respectively.

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<sup>36</sup> For Criterion 2, Opportunities for Students to Construct Knowledge in their Written Responses to Assignment Tasks, interrater reliability rates were computed for expository assignments only. Expository assignments represented about 87% of all assignments submitted. The remainders were imaginative assignments, which were scored using a different rubric for Criterion 2 than the one used for expository assignments.

**Exhibit A-1**  
**Agreement Rates for the Coding of Teacher Reported Writing Goals**

	1	2
	<b>Overall agreement</b> (includes noncodings in the calculation)	<b>Conditional agreement</b> (when at least one scorer coded for the goal)
<b>Rhetorical decisions</b>	<b>0.72</b>	<b>0.45</b>
(agreements/total possible agreements)	(56/78)	(18/40)
<b>Structure</b>	<b>0.81</b>	<b>0.55</b>
(agreements/total possible agreements)	(63/78)	(18/33)
<b>Conventions</b>	<b>0.89</b>	<b>0.58</b>
(agreements/total possible agreements)	(69/78)	(8/17)
<b>Process</b>	<b>0.95</b>	<b>0.91</b>
(agreements/total possible agreements)	(74/78)	(30/33)
<b>Average</b>	<b>0.84</b>	<b>0.60</b>

Note: Data is dichotomous. Scorers were instructed to check all of the types of goals that were evident in teacher reported goals submitted with the assignments.

**Exhibit A-2**  
**Agreement Rates for the Scoring of the Alignment Between Intended Goals  
and Goals Manifested in Assignments (Rubric 1b)**

	1	2
	Perfect agreement	Agreement within one scoring category
<b>Agreement rates</b>	<b>0.44</b>	<b>0.75</b>
(agreements/total possible agreements)	(34/78)	58/78)

Note: A 4-point Likert scale was used.

**Exhibit A-3**  
**Agreement Rates for the Scoring of Opportunities for Students to Construct  
Knowledge in their Written Responses to Assignment Tasks (Rubric 2a)**

	1	2
	Perfect agreement	Agreement within one scale point
<b>Agreement rates</b>	<b>0.44</b>	<b>0.83</b>
(agreements/total possible agreements)	(30/69)	(57/69)

Note: A 3-point Likert scale was used.

### Student Work

During 2009–10, SRI collected student work (linked to the teacher assignments described above) twice from seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers’ target class. The student work broadened our measurement of students’ writing skills by demonstrating the extent to which students used best writing practices in their work. Per the study design, we did not score the student work this year. All student work beyond the baseline year will be scored in 2011. The analytic procedures are described in reports where the data are presented. The *Report on Baseline WPD Teacher Assignments and Student Work* (Murphy, Gallagher, & Hafter, 2010) describes the analysis of student work from 2007–08.

### Sample and Response Rates

In 2009–10, there were 143 teachers who returned student work. Across the 39 schools, the average response rate on the student work was 91%. Four schools had response rates lower than 80%, and 29 schools had a 100% response rate

### On-Demand Writing Prompts and Reflection

Writing prompts are a direct measure of student writing proficiency that uses the National Writing Project library of writing prompts and capitalizes on recent work with the scoring rubrics and scoring methods that apply to them. We administered two National Writing Project writing prompts to students of seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers at the beginning and end of 2009–10. Reflections are assigned to students within 3 days of completing their writing prompt. They are intended to capture students’ own analyses of the



strengths of their writing and aspects they would revise if they were given the opportunity. Students' responses to writing prompts and reflections will be scored by National Writing Project experts in summer 2011.

### ***Sample and Response Rates***

Writing prompts and reflections were collected from students in seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers' target class. Across the 39 schools in our study our average response rate was 93%. Three schools had response rates lower than 80%, and 29 schools had a 100% response rate. All or almost all of the students in the 151 participating ELA teachers' target classes completed writing prompts, and, of these, the work of eight students per class were selected at random for a total of approximately 1,200 students.

### ***Administration***

In 2009–10, teachers administered writing prompts and reflections to their target class in fall and again in spring. SRI's on-demand writing prompts included four matched sets so that students received the same type of prompt in the spring as in the fall. For example, if a student received an expository persuasive letter in the fall, she would receive the same type of prompt in the spring. In fall, teachers were instructed to randomly distribute the four prompts across the students in the class as evenly as possible, making note of which student had which prompt. Based on their fall prompt, SRI assigned students to prompts for the spring administration and prepared individual packets for each student. SRI provided teachers with extra spring prompts for students new to the class since the fall writing prompt administration. The student reflections are the same for each student and the same in fall and spring. In both fall and spring, students wrote on the prompt and returned it to the teacher at the end of the period. Within 3 days, the teacher gave the prompts back to students to ask them to read their response and write a reflection on their work in response to a standard reflection prompt. When developing their reflection, students were instructed not to revise their original response to the writing prompt.

### ***Data Preparation and Analysis***

SRI first culled out (at random) eight matching sets of prompts for each class. If a classroom did not yield enough matched prompt sets to get two sets for each prompt type, we sampled randomly to get to eight total students; but across the condition, we tried to even out the distribution, such that as close as possible, we had equal numbers of prompt types. Those 16 prompts and their companion reflections are the data that will be analyzed for our final report. The prompts were cleaned for any identifying information and sorted into files in preparation for scoring. SRI staff cleaned and sorted the reflections and they were coded during the summer coding session, along with the teacher assignments. The specific details of the prompt coding session and analysis of the prompts and reflections will be included in our final report.

### ***Case Studies***

SRI used case studies, involving site visits and phone interviews, to develop a more nuanced understanding of the context and capacity of the Local Writing Project sites, partnership schools, and delayed partnership schools in the study. Case study data provided in-depth descriptions of school context and professional development that might influence teacher and student outcomes. For example, in interviews with teachers, we explored characteristics of their professional communities; gathered information about writing instruction as well as knowledge, skills, and attitudes about writing; and gathered data about any writing professional development in which they participated. For partnership schools, the data collection on professional development included additional questions about partnership work, including aids and barriers to partnership development and their work with the Local Writing Project site.

### ***Data Collection***

We collected case study data from each of the 39 schools in the study in 2009–10. In the fall, we conducted phone interviews with all partnership and delayed partnership schools. We visited each partnership school in the winter with the exception of two schools, which subsequently dropped out of the study. We conducted

1-day visits to 12 of the partnership schools and 2 days to 6 schools. During these visits, we interviewed the Local Writing Project site director, teacher-consultants who worked with the partnership school, school leaders, and teachers at the partnership school, and a sample of school leaders and teachers at the delayed partnership school. Two-day visits were scheduled to coincide with professional development activities and allow more time for classroom observations. We also observed in 17 classrooms and at six professional development events. Across the partnership schools, we collected relevant documents such as lesson plans, handouts, and professional development projects. In the spring, we did phone interviews with the 18 partnership schools remaining in the study.

### **Data Analysis**

Our approach to analyzing the qualitative data entailed the use of structured debriefing forms keyed to analytic categories, such as National Writing Project and other professional development, teacher community, school and district context, and reported program effects. We first analyzed the data from each partnership to understand the Local Writing Project site, the nature of the intervention, and ensuing changes occurring in each partnership school. We then looked across partnerships to identify common themes or patterns that were related to the partnership professional development and changes in teacher practice more broadly. In delayed partnership schools, we analyzed the interview data in a similar manner to understand the extent to which important constructs are similar or dissimilar between partnership and delayed partnership schools, and the extent to which delayed partnership schools are engaging in school improvement efforts that may contribute to changes in writing outcomes.

We analyzed the qualitative data in an iterative manner. During the visits, site visitors discussed what they learned in their interviews and, if necessary, revised the data collection plan to fill in any gaps. Site visitors also examined initial hypotheses and discussed themes that emerged that may not have been anticipated. Engaging in this analytic process while on-site served to tailor and refine data collection to capture the most important features of local partnerships. It also allowed researchers to generate and test hypotheses with respondents while still in the field. Once each visit was completed, site visitors drafted their case study reports, integrating data across respondents and documents and refining case-specific analytic themes. At project-wide debriefing meetings, teams discussed emerging themes from each site, compared the salience of those themes across the sites, and charted confirming and disconfirming evidence for each theme. The goal of the cross-site analysis is to compare, contrast, and synthesize findings and propositions from the single cases to arrive at initial conclusions that apply to all partnerships or to a subset of partnerships.

### **Quarterly Partnership Monitoring**

Through quarterly partnership monitoring, Local Writing Project site directors or their teacher-consultants described and documented the work of their partnerships. As this data collection effort is focused on the treatment—the partnership work—it is not collected for delayed partnership schools. Quarterly partnership monitoring captured the diversity of partnership activities from sites' point of view and allowed us to define and track an initial set of dimensions along which partnership and professional development designs varied. In addition to aiding the cross-partnership analysis, these documents helped site visitors gain a deeper understanding of professional development within each partnership and served to triangulate the data gathered through interviews and the SRI teacher survey.

Quarterly partnership monitoring consisted of three components: (1) description of the content, frequency, and duration of professional development; (2) documentation of the contact hours of participating teachers; and (3) a report of partnership expenditures. In addition, Local Writing Project site directors submitted materials developed to plan the partnership professional development that best exemplified the core work of the partnership.

SRI gathered these documents at three points during the 2009–10 year: end of summer 2009, end of the fall semester, and end of the school year in 2010. Local Writing Project sites' incentives from the National Writing Project were partially dependent upon completion of all quarterly partnership monitoring documents; each of the 14 Local Writing Project sites participating in the study completed all of their quarterly

partnership monitoring forms. However, cost data from one site could not be verified so that site was removed from analysis.

### ***Administration***

In summer 2009, SRI held a series of conference calls with Local Writing Project site directors and teacher-consultants to orient them to the quarterly partnership monitoring process and documents. SRI later held one-on-one information sessions about the documents with Local Writing Project site directors and teacher-consultants throughout the fall, as requested.

### ***Tracking, Confirming, and Analysis***

SRI staff carefully tracked the documents and materials submitted for each partnership to aid follow-up with site directors and, ultimately, with cleaning and analysis. We followed a quality control process with each set of quarterly partnership monitoring documents. The first step was a check on internal consistency performed centrally by two researchers working together to ensure consistency across sites and over time. They confirmed that Local Writing Project sites submitted descriptions and contact hours for professional development during the time period reported and verified that the reported costs included staff salaries, stipends, and substitute costs. In the first step of the review process, SRI researchers identified inconsistencies or missing data and posed clarifying questions for site visitors. Site visitors then checked the quarterly partnership monitoring documents for alignment with their knowledge of the partnership from case study interviews and, if necessary, contacted the Local Writing Project site director to address any remaining questions.

Once all of the documents were received from the sites and verified through the quality control process, we created a summary file for each teacher in each school with information about the partnership professional development events they attended. Included in this file is the length of the event and format of each event. School rosters were merged with the contact hour files and discrepancies were addressed by contacting schools. This analysis provided us with information on how much professional development each teacher received, which was then merged with the SRI teacher survey file. We also developed school-level summary files to document professional development at the school level.

## **Naturally Occurring Partnerships**

In 2008–09, the substudy of naturally occurring partnerships focused on the development and implementation of partnerships in a small sample of Local Writing Project sites that were nominated based on their experience with partnership work. In 2009–10, we focused on partnerships involving four of the Local Writing Project sites in the SRI study. In both cases, our purpose was to better understand possible effects of study constraints and benefits on the partnership work in our core study. We conducted case studies of four relatively new naturally occurring partnership schools. We used the same protocols and interviewed the same types of people (the Local Writing Project site director, teacher-consultants, school leaders, and teachers) as in the core study. Topics covered included site and school context, planning, professional development, and changes in teacher community and practice. Data were analyzed in an identical manner to that employed in the core study. At project-wide debrief meetings, themes that emerged in core study schools were explored in naturally occurring partnership schools to address the substudy's primary research question.



## Appendix B: Social Network Analysis

In this appendix, we describe the data sources, analysis procedures, and detailed results of the social network analysis discussed in Chapter 6, under the heading “Collegiality and Professional Community.” We focus on results from the *social influence models*<sup>37,38</sup> (Friedkin 2003; Leenders 2002) that we fit to the data. Social influence models use data on social networks to help evaluators examine how professional interactions among teachers, under the constraints of local contexts, bring about changes in teachers individually and collectively in the process of reform. The social network data used in the models comes from the National Evaluation of Writing Project Professional Development data on the exchange of resources and expertise, primarily among faculty members in a school. Social influence models consider how an individual’s changes, such as the enactment of new strategies for teaching writing in the classroom, are a function of their interactions with others. Not only can these models demonstrate the mechanism of change, they can also allow us to better understand how teachers act as agents of the reform process.

Our analyses of teachers’ social influence are nonexperimental, both because attempts to change processes of social influence are not common to all partnerships and because we focus on social influence within partnership schools only. The aim of these analyses was to explore one mechanism by which the direct effects of professional development might be augmented, namely, through interactions with colleagues who receive the professional development. We call this a *mediated effect* of professional development.

### Rationale for Examining Mediated Effects of Professional Development in the Evaluation Study

In the field of teacher professional development, there is a basic assumption that changes to teachers’ instructional practice result from their direct participation in high-quality professional development.<sup>39,40,41</sup> This assumption may be due to the alignment of research on the features of high-quality professional development with that on how people learn. Both emphasize the importance of providing learners with extended opportunities for practice that includes feedback and reflection<sup>42,43</sup>. Direct participation in extended professional development may not be the only mechanism by which teachers learn, however. A large body of research, including our own, explores the role that collegial interaction on instructional matters can play in changing teachers’ instruction.<sup>44,45,46,47</sup> Collegial interaction enables the transfer of expertise from one teacher

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<sup>37</sup> Friedkin, N.E. (2003). Social influence network theory: Toward a science of strategic modifications of interpersonal influence systems. In R. Brieger, K. Carley, & P. Pattison (Eds.), *Dynamic Social Network Modeling and Analysis* (pp.89-100). Washington, DC: National Academy of Sciences.

<sup>38</sup> Leenders, R.T.A.J. (2002). Modeling social influence through network autocorrelation: Constructing the weight matrix. *Social Networks*, 24(1), 21-47.

<sup>39</sup> Borko, H. (2004). Professional development and teacher learning: Mapping the terrain. *Educational Researcher*, 33(8), 3-15.

<sup>40</sup> Desimone, L.M. (2009). Improving impact studies of teachers' professional development: Toward better conceptualizations and measures. *Educational Researcher*, 8(3), 181-199.

<sup>41</sup> Wilson, S. & Berne, J. (1999). Teacher learning and the acquisition of professional knowledge: An examination of research on professional development. *Review of Research in Education*, 24, 173-209.

<sup>42</sup> Hammerness, K., Darling-Hammond, L., & Bransford, J. (with Berliner, D., Cochran-Smith, M., McDonald, M., & Zeichner, K.). (2005). How teachers learn and develop. In L. Darling-Hammond & J. Bransford (Eds.), *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do* (pp. 358-389). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

<sup>43</sup> Putnam, R. & Borko, H. (2000). What do new views of knowledge and thinking have to say about research on teacher learning? *Educational Researcher*, 29(1), 4-15.

<sup>44</sup> Frank, K., Zhao, Y., & Borman, K. (2004). Social capital and the diffusion of innovations within organizations: The case of computer technology in schools. *Sociology of Education*, 77(2), 148-171.

to another, and it also can exert normative pressure on teachers to conform to mandates for change<sup>48</sup> Schools are contexts where expert teachers may be inclined to help their colleagues because of their strong identification with the organization and with their profession.<sup>49,50</sup> Furthermore, teachers value the ideas of colleagues as potential sources of solutions to problems of instruction and colleagues are a more proximal resource for help than are most professional development providers.<sup>51,52</sup>

To date, professional development researchers have not explored how these two mechanisms—direct participation and collegial interaction—may complement one another in the context of a larger instructional improvement initiative in which multiple teachers in a school are participating. We explore here one mechanism, mediation, by which these two mechanisms may augment learning from professional development. Mediated effects, as we define them, refer to changes teachers make to their practice as a consequence of interacting with colleagues who participated in professional development, controlling for their own participation in professional development. Building from the findings of Frank and colleagues (2008), we posit that participation in professional development in the context of schoolwide reform is likely to make visible those teachers who have or are developing expertise related to the content of professional development, making these teachers more likely to be sought-after sources of help for their colleagues. By receiving high-quality professional development participants' own practice and skill in describing key elements of their practice can both be augmented.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, collegial interactions with these participants are likely to transfer expertise needed to improve practice, even if in a more incremental way than professional development transfers expertise.

## Sources of Data for the Social Influence Models

We relied on both the annual teacher survey and the quarterly partnership monitoring tool as sources of data for the models we fit. Data from Years 2 and 3 were used in the analysis.

### Dependent Variables

The primary outcomes of interest were two teaching practices: (1) breadth of purposes for writing that teachers assigned students and (2) engagement of students in writing processes.

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- <sup>45</sup> Horn, I.S. & Little, J.W. (2010). Attending to problems of practice: Routines and resources for professional learning in teachers' workplace interactions. *American Educational Research Journal*, 47(1), 181-217.
- <sup>46</sup> Little, J.W. (2003). Inside teacher community: Representations of classroom practice. *Teachers College Record*, 105(6), 913-945.
- <sup>47</sup> Penuel, W.R., Frank, K., & Krause, A. (2006). The distribution of resources and expertise and the implementation of schoolwide reform initiatives. In *Proceedings of the 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Learning Sciences*, 522-528.
- <sup>48</sup> Penuel, W. R., & Frank, K. A. (in press). Teachers' social capital and the implementation of schoolwide reforms. In S. Kelly (Ed.), *Understanding teacher effects*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- <sup>49</sup> Frank, K. A. (2009). Quasi-ties: Directing resources to members of a collective. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 52(12), 1613-1645.
- <sup>50</sup> Youngs, P., Frank, K. A., Thum, Y. M., & Low, M. (in press). The motivation of teachers to produce human capital and conform to their contexts. In T. M. Smith, L. M. Desimone & A. C. Porter (Eds.), *Issues in the induction and mentoring of new teachers*.
- <sup>51</sup> Kennedy, Aileen (2005). *Models of continuing professional development: A framework for analysis*. *Journal of In-Service Education*, 31(2), 235-250.
- <sup>52</sup> Smylie, M.A. (1989). Teacher's views of the effectiveness of sources of learning to teach. *The Elementary School Journal*, 89(5), 543-558.
- <sup>53</sup> Frank, K. A., Zhao, Y., Penuel, W. R., Ellefson, N. C., & Porter, S. (in press). Focus, fiddle and friends: A longitudinal study of characteristics of effective technology professional development. *Sociology of Education*.

### ***Breadth of Writing Purposes Taught in 2009–10***

In the 2009–10 survey, each teacher was asked to rate how often they had students engage in writing for the following purposes: “To reflect on an experience or topic (e.g., journaling),” “To express themselves creatively (e.g., a poem, story, or play),” “To recount a story or event through narrative,” “To describe a thing, place, process, or procedure (e.g., an essay, lab report, or descriptive response),” “To explain a concept, process, or relationship (e.g., comparison/contrast, problem/solution),” “To make an argument intended to persuade others,” “To gain practice with writing mechanics within students’ own writing,” “To gain practice with particular forms of writing (e.g., letter writing),” and “To gain practice with forms of writing encountered on standardized tests.” Teachers rated on a 6-point scale: 0 = Never, 1 = Fewer than 5 times, 2 = 5 times or more, 3 = Monthly, 4 = Weekly, and 5 = Daily. We aggregated these items into one composite variable by taking the mean because these items describe the same latent trait of writing purposes ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ).

### ***Engagement of Students in Writing Process in 2009–10***

In the 2009–10 survey, teachers were asked to rate how often they had students engage in several writing-related activities on a 6-point scale: 0 = Never, 1 = Fewer than 5 times, 2 = 5 times or more, 3 = Monthly, 4 = Weekly, and 5 = Daily. These activities included “Brainstorming or organizing ideas for writing text,” “Composing text,” “Revising text (focused on meaning and ideas),” “Editing text (focused on grammar, usage, punctuation, spelling),” “Meeting individually with the teacher to get oral feedback or discuss how to improve his or her writing,” “Reviewing written feedback on their own writing given by the teacher,” “Sharing or presenting their own writing to peers,” and “Analyzing what makes particular texts good or poor models of writing (individually or with others).” We aggregated one composite variable by averaging the ratings on these items ( $\alpha = .96$ ).

### ***Independent Variable: Exposure to Expertise Through Collegial Interactions***

To measure teachers’ interactions, in our 2009–10 teacher survey, we asked teachers to list five colleagues in the same school who had provided them with help teaching writing. We also asked teachers to rate various types of interactions on a 5-point scale: 0 = not at all, 1 = once or twice this year, 2 = monthly, 3 = weekly, and 4 = daily. These types of interactions included “Gave me curriculum resources (e.g., texts, lesson plans, print materials for students),” “Gave a demonstration of how to lead a writing lesson or activity,” “Provided me with feedback on my teaching that I used to improve how I teach writing,” “Gave me an idea for a new writing-related activity to use with my students,” and “Helped me adapt or improve a writing activity I used with my students.” The original units of the frequency of interactions were transformed to days (0 = 0 days, 1 = 2 days, 2 = 10 days, 3 = 36 days, 4 = 180 days). We then summed the frequency of interaction between two teachers across these different types of interactions. For instance, teacher Lisa nominated Bob as a help provider. Bob had given Lisa curriculum resources monthly (10), a demonstration of instruction once or twice in this year (2), and an idea for a new writing-related activity every week (36). Thus, given the pair of these two teachers, Lisa and Bob, we would calculate the frequency of their interactions as the sum of these frequencies to be 48 (10 + 2 + 36).

We fit models that considered the expertise of each colleague who provided help to teachers reporting receiving help from that colleague. “Expertise” for purposes of these analyses was derived from those colleagues’ own report of their writing instruction (either breadth of purposes or writing processes) from the baseline year of the study in 2007–08, prior to the initiation of partnership activities. The content of those measures is described above. We calculated a measure of exposure to expertise through interaction with faculty members who were exposed to high levels of professional development by multiplying the frequency of the interaction  $i$  reported with the writing professional development status of teacher  $i'$ . For example, if Lisa reported interacting with Bob at a frequency level of 2 in 2009–10 school year, and Bob had more than 30 hours of prior professional development in 2008–09 (the dummy variable = 1), then Lisa’s exposure (via Bob) is  $2 \times 1 = 2$ . If besides Bob, Lisa also nominated Lucy, with writing professional development of 30 hours, at a frequency of 180 ( $180 \times 1 = 180$ ), Tracy with professional development participation of less than 30 hours at a frequency of 10 ( $10 \times 0 = 0$ ), and Tom with professional development participation of

12 hours at a frequency level of 36 (36 x 0 = 0) then, to combine information across Lisa's network, we take the sum exposure across all teachers that Lisa nominated between 2009 and 2010:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Direct Exposure}_i &= \sum_{\substack{i'=1, \\ i' \neq i}}^{n_i} (\text{the frequency of overall interaction}_{ii'}) \\
 &\times (\text{providers' contact hours}) \quad (1)
 \end{aligned}$$

where  $n_i$  is the number of teachers  $i$  (e.g., Lisa) indicated as providing help with writing instruction (e.g.,  $n_i = 4$ ) and *the frequency of the overall interaction<sub>ii'</sub>* represents the frequency with which teacher  $i$  (e.g., Lisa) reported receiving help from  $i'$  (e.g., Bob). In the previous example, the direct exposure of Lisa to her colleagues equals 182 (2 + 180 + 0 + 0).

## **Control Variables**

### ***Prior Instructional Practice***

In the analysis, we included as a control variable teachers' own practice in the previous year for each of the two outcomes of interest.

### ***Hours of Writing Professional Development***

We used the total number of hours of exposure to writing professional development as reported on the quarterly partnership monitoring tool as an interval measure of professional development duration. In this analysis, professional development duration was not a focal variable; rather, our analysis considered the effect of social influence from colleagues controlling for the professional development they themselves received.

### ***Being an English/Language Arts Teacher***

Although teaching writing is a cross-subject activity, compared to teachers in other subject areas, teachers who taught English/language arts (ELA) might be more likely to provide help because they are content experts. We thus include a dummy variable indicating whether the teacher was an ELA teacher in 2009–10.

### ***Years Teaching at Current School***

Teachers with more experience in their school may have developed local knowledge that enhances their writing instruction and makes them more willing to experiment with new strategies for teaching writing. The longer the teacher has been teaching in the school, the more the teacher would learn local knowledge about the school, the community, and the students. To account for possible effects of teaching experience in our model, in the 2009–10 survey, we asked teachers to fill in total years that they had been teaching in this school, including 2010.

### ***Pressure from Accountability Tests***

We anticipated that teachers who feel pressures to improve student writing performance on a state assessment program might be more likely to be motivated to collaborate or improve their own effectiveness. To control for such contextual factors, in the 2009–10 survey, teachers were asked to rate the amount of pressure that they perceived on an 8-point scale (0 to 7).

### ***Position: Being a Coach and/or Teacher Consultant in 2009–10***

If teachers were coaches and/or teacher-consultants, they were expected to be more involved in professional development and more likely to provide help to others. Thus, if a teacher was a coach and/or teacher-consultant, the indicator is coded as “1”; otherwise, “0.”



## **Gender**

If a teacher was a female, the indicator is coded as “1”; otherwise, “0.”

## **Having a High School or Associate’s Degree**

Teachers who only have a high school or associate’s degree might be less prepared than their colleagues with more advanced degrees to use a variety of strategies for teaching writing. If a teacher had a high school or associate’s degree in Year 3, the dummy variable assigns her/him as “1”; otherwise, “0.”

## **Independent Variable Data Missing**

For independent variables that had missing data, we set the missing values to zero and included a flag in the model indicating the original value was missing.<sup>54</sup>

## **Approach to Analysis**

Because of the nested structure of the data (teachers within schools), we fit hierarchical linear models to the data to estimate the effects of social influence on teachers’ writing instruction, controlling for the direct effects of their own participation in writing professional development. We first fit unconditional models to analyze variance components of each level, then fit separate models for each dependent variable using the independent and control variables described above. The models were specified as follows:

LEVEL 1

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_{00} + \beta_{1j}(\text{SINFIL})_{ij} + \beta_{2j}(\text{PRIOR})_{ij} + \beta_{3j}(\text{QPMY2Y3})_{ij} + \beta_{4j}(\text{ENGLISH})_{ij} + \beta_{5j}(\text{YRSTCHG})_{ij} + \beta_{6j}(\text{PRESSURE})_{ij} + \beta_{7j}(\text{COACH09})_{ij} + \beta_{8j}(\text{FEMALE})_{ij} + \beta_{9j}(\text{DEGREE})_{ij} + \beta_{10j}(\text{FLAGNWP})_{ij} + r_{ij}$$

LEVEL 2

$$\beta_{00} = \gamma_{00} + u_{0j}$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10}$$

$$\beta_{2j} = \gamma_{20}$$

$$\beta_{3j} = \gamma_{30}$$

$$\beta_{4j} = \gamma_{40}$$

$$\beta_{5j} = \gamma_{50}$$

$$\beta_{6j} = \gamma_{60}$$

$$\beta_{7j} = \gamma_{70}$$

$$\beta_{8j} = \gamma_{80}$$

$$\beta_{9j} = \gamma_{90}$$

$$\beta_{10j} = \gamma_{100}$$

We standardized all variables in the model with  $M = 0$  and  $SD = 1$ . The results of our model are presented in Appendix C.

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<sup>54</sup> Cohen, J., & Cohen, P. (1983). *Applied multiple regression/correlation analysis for the behavioral sciences*. Hillsdale, NJ. Lawrence Erlbaum.



## Appendix C: Supplemental Technical Information

This appendix provides supplemental information for all *statistical comparisons* presented in the main report. The exhibits are organized by chapter and numbered for the appendix (C) followed by the chapter in the main body of the report to which the data refer (chapter 4, 5, or 6).

**Exhibits C-4.1 and C-4.2 present survey data describing participation in writing professional development.** The *p* values reported correspond to tests of the significance of the difference between individuals in partnership and delayed partnership schools.

**Exhibit C-4.1**  
**Survey Data for Exhibit 4-1:**  
**Percentage of Staff Participating in Writing Professional Development**

	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
All Staff	58%* <i>0.34</i> <i>(0.18)</i> <i>n = 874</i>	27%* <i>-0.98</i> <i>(0.23)</i> <i>n = 815</i>	< 0.01
ELA Teachers	81%* <i>1.46</i> <i>(0.22)</i> <i>n = 225</i>	45%* <i>-0.18</i> <i>(0.32)</i> <i>n = 232</i>	< 0.01

Note: To take into account the nesting of teachers in schools, percentages are estimated from a hierarchical model with a logit link function. The logits and standard errors of logits from the model are shown in italics below the estimated percentages.

Source: 2009–10 teacher survey, question 3.

\**p* < 0.05.

**Exhibit C-4.2**  
**Survey Data for Exhibit 4-2:**  
**Average Duration (Hours) of Writing Professional Development for Participating Staff**

	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
All Staff	17.97 <i>(1.92)</i> <i>n = 499</i>	13.83 <i>(1.13)</i> <i>n = 243</i>	0.13
ELA Teachers	26.29* <i>(3.22)</i> <i>n = 181</i>	15.85* <i>(1.78)</i> <i>n = 108</i>	0.02

Source: 2009–10 teacher survey, question 3.

\**p* < 0.05.

**Exhibits C-5.1 through C-5.3 present data on the content of professional development.** The *p* values reported correspond to tests of the significance of the difference between individuals in partnership and delayed partnership schools.

**Exhibit C-5.1**  
**Survey Data for Exhibits 5-1, 5-2, and 5-3:**  
**Participant Reports of Major Foci of Writing Professional Development**

		Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
Improving student skills and knowledge of planning and prewriting strategies (brainstorming, generating and organizing ideas, identifying purpose and audience)	All Staff	44%* -0.24 (0.15) <i>n</i> = 544	31%* -0.79 (0.13) <i>n</i> = 295	< 0.01
	ELA Teachers	55%* 0.21 (0.17) <i>n</i> = 191	36%* -0.56 (0.20) <i>n</i> = 118	< 0.01
Improving student skills in drafting, revising, and editing text (for meaning, clarity, sentence structure, word choice)	All Staff	34%* -0.68 (0.13) <i>n</i> = 541	23%* -1.23 (0.18) <i>n</i> = 293	0.01
	ELA Teachers	52%* 0.09 (0.19) <i>n</i> = 190	31%* -0.81 (0.27) <i>n</i> = 118	< 0.01
Improving collaboration among teachers on writing instruction (either within a single subject or grade level or across the curriculum)	All Staff	35% -0.63 (0.14) <i>n</i> = 536	23% -1.19 (0.26) <i>n</i> = 283	0.06
	ELA Teachers	40%* -0.38 (0.20) <i>n</i> = 189	24%* -1.18 (0.27) <i>n</i> = 115	0.02

Note: To take into account the nesting of teachers in schools, percentages are estimated from a hierarchical model with a logit link function. The logits and standard errors of logits from the model are shown in italics below the estimated percentages.

Source: 2009–10 teacher survey, question 4.

\**p* < 0.05.

**Exhibit C-5.2**  
**Survey Data for Exhibits 5-4 and 5-5:**  
**Percentage of Staff and ELA Teachers Participating in Active Professional Development,**  
**Among Staff and ELA Teachers Participating in Writing Professional Development**

		Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
I communicated with professional development provider(s) concerning classroom implementation	All Staff	29%*	11%*	< 0.01
		-0.90 (0.14) <i>n</i> = 876	-2.13 (0.19) <i>n</i> = 816	
	ELA Teachers	49%*	17%*	< 0.01
		-0.04 (0.18) <i>n</i> = 227	-1.60 (0.26) <i>n</i> = 232	
My teaching was observed by professional development providers and feedback was provided	All Staff	12%*	6%*	< 0.01
		-1.96 (0.13) <i>n</i> = 876	-2.67 (0.24) <i>n</i> = 816	
	ELA Teachers	26%*	10%*	< 0.01
		-1.05 (0.15) <i>n</i> = 227	-2.17 (0.31) <i>n</i> = 232	
I received coaching or mentoring in the classroom	All Staff	13%*	5%*	< 0.01
		-1.86 (0.18) <i>n</i> = 876	-2.86 (0.24) <i>n</i> = 816	
	ELA Teachers	27%*	10%*	< 0.01
		-1.01 (0.16) <i>n</i> = 227	-2.17 (0.27) <i>n</i> = 232	

Note: To take into account the nesting of teachers in schools, percentages are estimated from a hierarchical model with a logit link function. The logits and standard errors of logits from the model are shown in italics below the estimated percentages.

Source: 2009–10 teacher survey, question 5.

\**p* < 0.05.

**Exhibit C-5.3**  
**Survey Data for Exhibits 5-7 and 5-8:**  
**Coherence of Writing Professional Development**  
**as Rated by Participating Staff and ELA Teachers**

		Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
Designed to support state or district assessments	All Staff	2.74 (0.06) <i>n</i> = 508	2.54 (0.10) <i>n</i> = 256	0.07
	ELA Teachers	3.00 (0.10) <i>n</i> = 187	2.96 (0.11) <i>n</i> = 109	0.75
Designed to support state or district standards/curriculum frameworks	All Staff	2.79 (0.06) <i>n</i> = 512	2.58 (0.11) <i>n</i> = 257	0.08
	ELA Teachers	3.07 (0.09) <i>n</i> = 187	3.02 (0.12) <i>n</i> = 110	0.74
Designed to build on what you learned in earlier professional development experiences	All Staff	2.40* (0.08) <i>n</i> = 503	2.05* (0.11) <i>n</i> = 247	0.01
	ELA Teachers	2.83* (0.11) <i>n</i> = 184	2.31* (0.14) <i>n</i> = 107	< 0.01
Consistent with your own goals for your professional development	All Staff	2.48* (0.06) <i>n</i> = 507	2.08* (0.10) <i>n</i> = 250	< 0.01
	ELA Teachers	2.97* (0.10) <i>n</i> = 190	2.36* (0.12) <i>n</i> = 105	< 0.01

Source: 2009–10 teacher survey, question 6.

\**p* < 0.05.

Exhibits C-6.1 and C-6.2 present survey data describing teacher perception of the influence of professional development on their writing instruction. The  $p$  values reported correspond to tests of the significance of the difference between individuals in partnership and delayed partnership schools.

**Exhibit C-6.1**  
**Survey Data for Exhibit 6-1:**  
**Extent to Which Professional Development Influenced Writing Instruction**

	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	$p$ Value
All Staff	3.19* (0.10) $n = 861$	2.65* (0.12) $n = 804$	< 0.01
ELA Teachers	4.62* (0.15) $n = 225$	3.56* (0.24) $n = 231$	< 0.01

Source: 2009–10 teacher survey, question 12.

\* $p < 0.05$ .

**Exhibit C-6.2**  
**Percentage of Staff Reporting Professional Development Influenced Writing Instruction to a Relatively Greater Extent**

	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	$p$ Value
All Staff	45%* <i>-0.21</i> (0.10) $n = 861$	34%* <i>-0.66</i> (0.13) $n = 804$	0.01
ELA Teachers	75%* <i>1.07</i> (0.17) $n = 225$	54%* <i>0.14</i> (0.20) $n = 231$	< 0.01

Note: The scale ranges from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (A great deal), where 4, 5, 6, and 7 are coded as “To a relatively greater extent” than 1, 2 and 3.

To take into account the nesting of teachers in schools, percentages are estimated from a hierarchical model with a logit link function. The logits and standard errors of logits from the model are shown in italics below the estimated percentages.

Source: 2009–10 teacher survey, question 12.

\* $p < 0.05$ .

Exhibit C-6.3 presents survey data describing teacher report of student engagement in **writing to reflect**. The  $p$  values reported correspond to tests of the significance of the difference between individuals in partnership and delayed partnership schools.

**Exhibit C-6.3**  
**Survey Data for Exhibit 6-2:**  
**Percentage of Teachers Reporting Students Are Engaged in Writing**  
**to Reflect on an Experience or Topic at Least Weekly**

	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	$p$ Value
All Teachers	32% <i>-0.77</i> <i>(0.10)</i> <i>n = 726</i>	31% <i>-0.78</i> <i>(0.11)</i> <i>n = 683</i>	0.94
ELA Teachers	60%* <i>0.41</i> <i>(0.15)</i> <i>n = 181</i>	49%* <i>-0.04</i> <i>(0.16)</i> <i>n = 180</i>	0.04

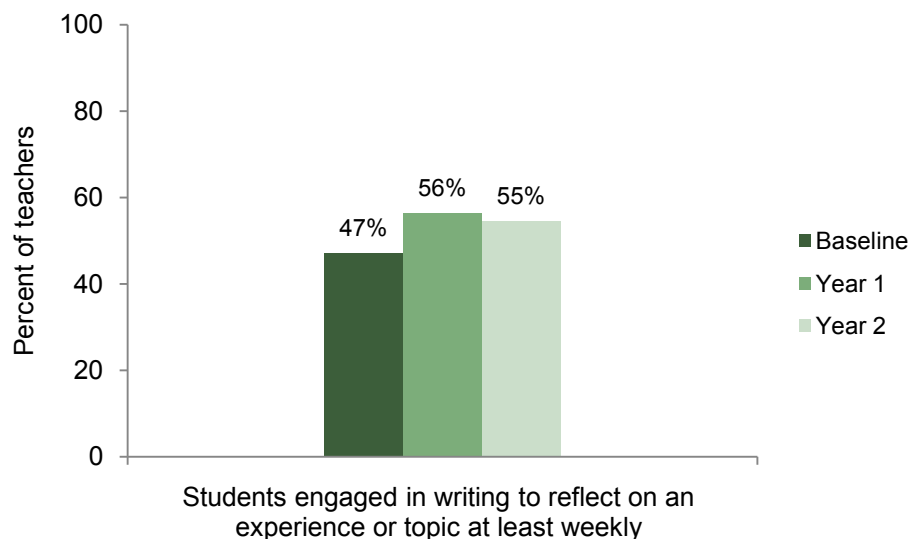
Note: To take into account the nesting of teachers in schools, percentages are estimated from a hierarchical model with a logit link function. The logits and standard errors of logits from the model are shown in italics below the estimated percentages.

Source: 2009–10 teacher survey, question 25.

\* $p < 0.05$ .

Exhibit C-6.4 presents survey data describing teacher report of student engagement in **writing to reflect from baseline to Year 2 of implementation**. The graph was based on the subset of respondents for whom we had all 3 years of data ( $n = 51$ ).

**Exhibit C-6.4**  
**Percentage of Staff Reporting Students Are Engaged in Writing to Reflect**  
**on an Experience or Topic at Least Weekly (Baseline to Year 2)**



Source: 2007–08, 2008–09, and 2009–10 teacher surveys, question 25.



**Exhibit C-6.5** presents data describing construction of knowledge demands of teacher assignments. The  $p$  values reported correspond to tests of the significance of the difference between individuals in partnership and delayed partnership schools.

**Exhibit C-6.5**  
**Construction of Knowledge Demands of Teacher Assignments,**  
**Among Seventh- and Eighth-Grade ELA Teachers**

	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	$p$ Value
Seventh- and Eighth-Grade ELA Teachers	2.18 (0.06) $n = 260$	2.11 (0.05) $n = 283$	0.36

Source: 2009–10 teacher assignments.

\* $p < 0.05$ .

**Exhibits C-6.6 and C-6.7 report data from factor analyses of survey items on writing processes.** They present the average score on the factor, the standard deviation of the score, and the number of respondents. The *p* values reported correspond to tests of the significance of the difference between individuals in partnership and delayed partnership schools. Beneath each table, we list the content of items that make up the scale and report the Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) to indicate the internal reliability of each factor. All items are a 6-point scale (0 to 5), with a maximum average of 5.

**Exhibit C-6.6**  
**Survey Data for Exhibit 6-3:**  
**Student Engagement in Writing Processes**

	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
All Teachers	1.72 (0.06) <i>n</i> = 725	1.77 (0.09) <i>n</i> = 681	0.72
ELA Teachers	2.94 (0.08) <i>n</i> = 181	2.91 (0.08) <i>n</i> = 179	0.78

Items: Brainstorming or organizing ideas for writing text; Composing text; Revising text (focused on meaning and ideas); Editing text (focused on grammar, usage, punctuation, spelling); Meeting individually with the teacher to get oral feedback or discuss how to improve his or her writing; Reviewing written feedback on their own writing given by the teacher; Reflecting on or evaluating their own writing; Sharing or presenting their own writing to peers; Analyzing what makes particular texts good or poor models of writing (individually or with others).

Source: 2009–10 teacher survey, question 25.

$\alpha$  = 0.96.

**Exhibit C-6.7**  
**Class Time Devoted to Four Key Writing Processes**

	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
All Teachers	1.76 (0.07) <i>n</i> = 722	1.78 (0.10) <i>n</i> = 682	0.98
ELA Teachers	2.97 (0.08) <i>n</i> = 182	2.93 (0.10) <i>n</i> = 179	0.70

Items: Improving students' skills and knowledge of prewriting or planning strategies (brainstorming, generating and organizing ideas, identifying purpose and audience); Improving student's skills in drafting, revising, and editing text (for meaning, clarity, sentence structure, word choice); Improving students' ability to work collaboratively with their peers on writing; Improving students' skills for analyzing models of good writing and applying insights to their own text.

Source: 2009–10 teacher survey, question 26.

$\alpha$  = 0.91.

**Exhibit C-6.8 reports data on writing process goals from teacher assignment analysis.** The *p* values reported correspond to tests of the significance of the difference between individuals in partnership and delayed partnership schools.

**Exhibit C-6.8**  
**Data for Exhibit 6-4:**  
**Percentage of Teacher Assignments Containing Writing Process Goals,**  
**Among Seventh- and Eighth-Grade ELA Teachers**

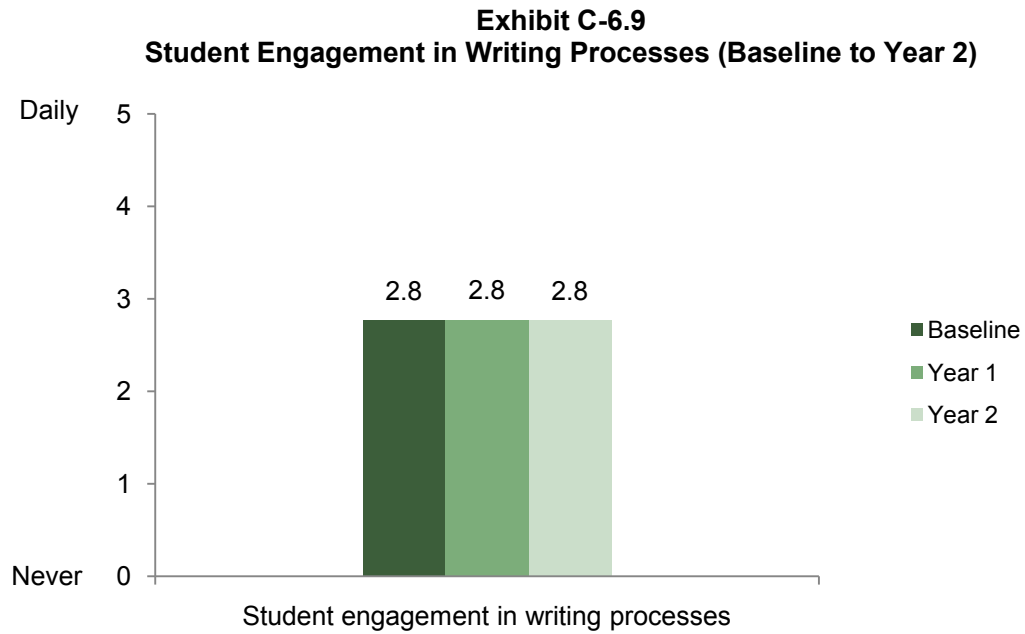
Writing Process Goal	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
Planning	12%* -1.99 (0.28) <i>n</i> = 258	5%* -2.91 (0.30) <i>n</i> = 286	0.04
Information gathering	11% -2.11 (0.20) <i>n</i> = 258	11% -2.11 (0.19) <i>n</i> = 286	0.99
Peer review	2% -4.12 (0.63) <i>n</i> = 258	2% -3.70 (0.41) <i>n</i> = 286	0.91
Revision	9% -2.33 (0.31) <i>n</i> = 258	4% -3.15 (0.32) <i>n</i> = 286	0.06
Editing	5% -2.98 (0.37) <i>n</i> = 258	6% -2.70 (0.28) <i>n</i> = 286	0.54
Reflection	1% -4.44 (0.58) <i>n</i> = 258	2% -4.03 (0.45) <i>n</i> = 286	0.57

Note: To take into account the nesting of teachers in schools, percentages are estimated from a hierarchical model with a logit link function. The logits and standard errors of logits from the model are shown in italics below the estimated percentages.

Source: 2009–10 teacher assignments.

\**p* < 0.05.

Exhibit C-6.9 presents survey data describing teacher report of the student engagement in writing scale from baseline to Year 2 of implementation. The graph was based on the subset of respondents for whom we had all 3 years of data ( $n = 43$ ).



Source: 2007–08, 2008–09, and 2009–10 teacher surveys, question 25.

Exhibits C-6.10 and C-6.11 present survey data describing teacher reports of sharing writing with students. The *p* values reported correspond to tests of the significance of the difference between individuals in partnership and delayed partnership schools.

**Exhibit C-6.10**  
**Survey Data for Exhibit 6-5:**  
**Percentage of Staff Reporting Sharing Unfinished Writing with Students**  
**More than Once in the Past Month**

	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
All Staff	17%* -1.56 (0.11) <i>n</i> = 864	13%* -1.95 (0.16) <i>n</i> = 806	0.04
ELA Teachers	42%* -0.33 (0.16) <i>n</i> = 227	25%* -1.12 (0.15) <i>n</i> = 231	< 0.01

Note: To take into account the nesting of teachers in schools, percentages are estimated from a hierarchical model with a logit link function. The logits and standard errors of logits from the model are shown in italics below the estimated percentages.

Source: 2009–10 teacher survey, question 17.

\**p* < 0.05.

**Exhibit C-6.11**  
**Percentage of Staff Reporting Sharing Finished Writing with Students**  
**More than Once in the Past Month**

	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
All Staff	16% -1.65 (0.12) <i>n</i> = 861	16% -1.65 (0.13) <i>n</i> = 805	0.99
ELA Teachers	34% -0.67 (0.17) <i>n</i> = 226	29% -0.89 (0.18) <i>n</i> = 230	0.38

Note: To take into account the nesting of teachers in schools, percentages are estimated from a hierarchical model with a logit link function. The logits and standard errors of logits from the model are shown in italics below the estimated percentages.

Source: 2009–10 teacher survey, question 17.

\**p* < 0.05.

**Exhibits C-6.12 and C-6.13 report data from factor analyses of survey items on writing genres.** They present the average score on the factor, the standard deviation of the score, and the number of respondents used. The *p* values reported correspond to tests of the significance of the difference between individuals in partnership and delayed partnership schools. Beneath each table, we list the content of items that make up the scale and report the Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) to indicate the internal reliability of each factor. All items are a 6-point scale (0 to 5), with a maximum average of 5.

**Exhibit C-6.12**  
**Variety of Content-Oriented Genres Assigned in Class**

	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
All Teachers	2.25 (0.09) <i>n</i> = 730	2.25 (0.10) <i>n</i> = 685	0.99
ELA Teachers	2.87 (0.10) <i>n</i> = 182	2.72 (0.13) <i>n</i> = 180	0.38

Note: These genres are not exclusive to ELA classes.

Items: To monitor or keep track of learning (e.g., learning logs, journaling, but not copying from the textbook or board); To reflect on an experience or topic (e.g., journaling); To describe a thing, place, process, or procedure (e.g., an essay, lab report, or descriptive response).

Source: 2009–10 teacher survey, question 25.

$\alpha$  = 0.83.

**Exhibit C-6.13**  
**Variety of ELA-Oriented Genres Assigned in Class**

	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
All Teachers	1.51 (0.06) <i>n</i> = 730	1.54 (0.08) <i>n</i> = 682	0.79
ELA Teachers	2.67 (0.09) <i>n</i> = 182	2.57 (0.09) <i>n</i> = 180	0.45

Note: These genres are not exclusive to ELA classes.

Items: To express themselves creatively (e.g., a poem, story, or play); To recount a story or event through narrative; To make an argument intended to persuade others; To gain practice with writing mechanics within students' own writing; To gain practice with particular forms of writing (e.g., letter writing); To gain practice with forms of writing encountered on standardized tests.

Source: 2009–10 teacher survey, question 25.

$\alpha$  = 0.90.

**Exhibit C-6.14 through C-6.17 present survey data describing collegiality among teachers.** The *p* values reported correspond to tests of the significance of the difference between individuals in partnership and delayed partnership schools.

**Exhibit C-6.14**  
**Survey Data for Exhibit 6-6:**  
**Percentage of Staff Discussing Lessons or Activities for Teaching Writing**  
**At Least Monthly in Grade-Level Meetings**

	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
All Staff	31% -0.78 (0.20) <i>n</i> = 609	29% -0.91 (0.22) <i>n</i> = 574	0.68
ELA Teachers	49%* -0.06 (0.25) <i>n</i> = 182	32%* -0.77 (0.18) <i>n</i> = 186	0.02

Note: To take into account the nesting of teachers in schools, percentages are estimated from a hierarchical model with a logit link function. The logits and standard errors of logits from the model are shown in italics below the estimated percentages.

Source: 2009–10 teacher survey, question 16.

\**p* < 0.05.

**Exhibit C-6.15**  
**Percentage of Staff Discussing Lessons or Activities for Teaching Writing**  
**At Least Monthly in Cross-Grade Meetings**

	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
All Staff	28% -0.93 (0.21) <i>n</i> = 691	25% -1.12 (0.21) <i>n</i> = 666	0.54
ELA Teachers	39%* -0.46 (0.25) <i>n</i> = 227	27%* -0.99 (0.22) <i>n</i> = 207	0.09

Note: To take into account the nesting of teachers in schools, percentages are estimated from a hierarchical model with a logit link function. The logits and standard errors of logits from the model are shown in italics below the estimated percentages.

Source: 2009–10 teacher survey, question 14.

\**p* < 0.05.

**Exhibit C-6.16**  
**Survey Data for Exhibit 6-7:**  
**Extent to Which Colleagues' Opinions Influence Writing Instruction**

	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
All Staff	3.12 (0.10) <i>n</i> = 862	2.90 (0.12) <i>n</i> = 804	0.12
ELA Teachers	4.69* (0.14) <i>n</i> = 226	4.06* (0.14) <i>n</i> = 231	< 0.01

Note: To take into account the nesting of teachers in schools, percentages are estimated from a hierarchical model with a logit link function. The logits and standard errors of logits from the model are shown in italics below the estimated percentages.

Source: 2009–10 teacher survey, question 12.

\* $p < 0.05$ .

**Exhibit C-6.17**  
**Percentage of Staff Reporting Colleagues' Opinions Influences Writing Instruction**  
**to a Relatively Greater Extent**

	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
All Staff	46% -0.16 (0.11) <i>n</i> = 862	41% -0.37 (0.11) <i>n</i> = 804	0.18
ELA Teachers	80%* 1.37 (0.20) <i>n</i> = 226	68%* 0.75 (0.16) <i>n</i> = 231	0.02

Note: The scale ranges from 1 (not at all) to 7 (a great deal), where 4, 5, 6, and 7 are coded as “to a relatively greater extent” than 1, 2 and 3.

To take into account the nesting of teachers in schools, percentages are estimated from a hierarchical model with a logit link function. The logits and standard errors of logits from the model are shown in italics below the estimated percentages.

Source: 2009–10 teacher survey, question 12.

\* $p < 0.05$ .



**Exhibit C-6.18 reports data from regression analyses using teacher's exposure to peers who had 30 or more writing professional development contact hours in 2008–10 (SINFIL), as identified by the quarterly partnership monitoring data, to predict instructional practice factors created from 2009–10 survey items as outcome measures.** The predictors in these analyses are teacher's exposure to peers who had 30 or more writing professional development contact hours in 2008–10 (SINFIL), prior instructional practice in 2007–08 (PRIOR), hours of writing professional development (QPMY2Y3), being an ELA teacher (ENGLISH), years teaching at current school (YRSTCHG), pressure from accountability tests (PRESSURE), exposure to expertise through collegial interactions, being a coach and/or teacher consultant, (COACH09), and gender (FEMALE), and having a high school or associate's degree (DEGREE).

**Exhibit C-6.18  
Model Results for Social Network Analysis**

	Breadth of Writing Purposes	Writing Processes
Intercept	0.000 (.045)	-0.044 (0.049)
Exposure to peers with 30+ writing professional development contact hours, 2008–10 (SINFIL)	0.103 ** (.030)	0.100** (.029)
Prior instructional practice in 2007-08 (PRIOR)	0.521*** (.042)	0.492*** (.043)
Hours of writing professional development (QPMY2Y3)	0.007 (.028)	0.0201 (.028)
ELA teacher (ENGLISH)	0.132** (.044)	0.220*** (.045)
Years teaching at current school (YRSTCHG)	-0.091** (.036)	-0.01 (.036)
Pressure from accountability tests (PRESSURE)	0.023 (.036)	0.047 (.035)
Coach and/or teacher consultant (COACH09)	-0.006 (.036)	0.027 (.036)
Gender (FEMALE)	0.017 (.037)	0.010 (.037)
High school or associate's degree (DEGREE)	0.203 (.126)	0.081 (.125)

Source: 2007–08, 2008–09, and 2009–10 teacher surveys.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

Exhibits C-6.19 through C-6.27 report data from the teacher log on students' opportunities to learn writing in seventh- and eighth-grade ELA classes. In these analyses, we compare the responses of seventh- and eighth-grade ELA teachers in partnership and delayed partnership schools. The *p* values reported correspond to tests of the significance of the difference between assignments in partnership and delayed partnership schools.

**Exhibit C-6.19**  
**Percentage of Days that ELA Teachers Reported Each as a Major Goal of Instruction**

Major Goal	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
Improving writing skills	60% <i>0.40</i> <i>(0.20)</i> <i>n = 622</i>	50% <i>-0.02</i> <i>(0.18)</i> <i>n = 684</i>	0.13
Improving skills in grammar, usage, punctuation, or spelling	22% <i>-1.28</i> <i>(0.33)</i> <i>n = 614</i>	27% <i>-0.99</i> <i>(0.23)</i> <i>n = 645</i>	0.52
Building vocabulary	20% <i>-1.39</i> <i>(0.22)</i> <i>n = 614</i>	23% <i>-1.18</i> <i>(0.24)</i> <i>n = 637</i>	0.54
Developing reading comprehension skills	25% <i>-1.10</i> <i>(0.29)</i> <i>n = 611</i>	37% <i>-0.54</i> <i>(0.23)</i> <i>n = 642</i>	0.16
Developing skills in responding to literature/text	31% <i>-0.80</i> <i>(0.22)</i> <i>n = 618</i>	37% <i>-0.52</i> <i>(0.27)</i> <i>n = 646</i>	0.35
Developing research skills	6% <i>-2.71</i> <i>(0.31)</i> <i>n = 601</i>	6% <i>-2.76</i> <i>(0.34)</i> <i>n = 619</i>	0.78
Developing speaking, listening, or oral presentation skills	9% <i>-2.31</i> <i>(0.27)</i> <i>n = 605</i>	11% <i>-2.10</i> <i>(0.21)</i> <i>n = 627</i>	0.55
Preparing students for a standardized test	15% <i>-1.73</i> <i>(0.24)</i> <i>n = 606</i>	13% <i>-1.92</i> <i>(0.26)</i> <i>n = 634</i>	0.80
Assessing knowledge or skills	14% <i>-1.84</i> <i>(0.26)</i> <i>n = 583</i>	13% <i>-1.93</i> <i>(0.21)</i> <i>n = 622</i>	0.69

Note: To take into account the nesting of teachers in schools, percentages are estimated from a hierarchical model with a logit link function. The logits and standard errors of logits from the model are shown in italics below the estimated percentages.

Source: 2009–10 teacher log, question 2.

\**p* < 0.05.

**Exhibit C-6.20**  
**Percentage of Days that Target Students Engaged in Any Writing Activity**

Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
84%	78%	0.09
<i>1.69</i>	<i>1.24</i>	
<i>(0.20)</i>	<i>(0.19)</i>	
<i>n = 677</i>	<i>n = 703</i>	

Note: To take into account the nesting of teachers in schools, percentages are estimated from a hierarchical model with a logit link function. The logits and standard errors of logits from the model are shown in italics below the estimated percentages.

Source: 2009–10 teacher log, question 3.

\* $p < 0.05$ .

**Exhibit C-6.21**  
**Percentage of Days that Target Students Planned, Composed, Edited, or Revised a Multiple Connected Paragraph Writing Assignment**

Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
35%	33%	0.71
<i>-0.61</i>	<i>-0.70</i>	
<i>(0.20)</i>	<i>(0.19)</i>	
<i>n = 536</i>	<i>n = 502</i>	

Note: To take into account the nesting of teachers in schools, percentages are estimated from a hierarchical model with a logit link function. The logits and standard errors of logits from the model are shown in italics below the estimated percentages.

Source: 2009–10 teacher log, question 4.

\* $p < 0.05$

**Exhibit C-6.22**  
**Percentage of Days that Target Students Wrote for Various Audiences**

Intended Audience	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
Teacher	83% <i>1.57</i> <i>(0.28)</i> <i>n = 565</i>	77% <i>1.22</i> <i>(0.18)</i> <i>n = 565</i>	0.30
The student herself or himself	30% <i>-0.87</i> <i>(0.22)</i> <i>n = 565</i>	27% <i>-0.99</i> <i>(0.18)</i> <i>n = 565</i>	0.54
Student's peers	48% <i>-0.10</i> <i>(0.20)</i> <i>n = 565</i>	33% <i>-0.70</i> <i>(0.21)</i> <i>n = 565</i>	0.05
An individual or group outside the classroom	10% <i>-2.20</i> <i>(0.32)</i> <i>n = 565</i>	15% <i>-1.75</i> <i>(0.24)</i> <i>n = 565</i>	0.37

Note: To take into account the nesting of teachers in schools, percentages are estimated from a hierarchical model with a logit link function. The logits and standard errors of logits from the model are shown in italics below the estimated percentages.

Source: 2009–10 teacher log, question 5.

\* $p < 0.05$ .

**Exhibit C-6.23**  
**Percentage of Days that Target Students Wrote for Specific Purposes**  
**as Part of an Assignment, Worksheet, Quiz, or Test**

Purpose of Student Writing	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
To monitor or keep track of learning	20% -1.41 (0.21) <i>n</i> = 565	21% -1.30 (0.27) <i>n</i> = 565	0.66
To reflect on an experience or topic	27% -1.00 (0.20) <i>n</i> = 565	29% -0.92 (0.17) <i>n</i> = 565	0.86
To express self creatively	25% -1.08 (0.21) <i>n</i> = 565	19% -1.47 (0.21) <i>n</i> = 565	0.21
To recount a story or event through narrative	18% -1.53 (0.17) <i>n</i> = 565	14% -1.80 (0.21) <i>n</i> = 565	0.35
To describe a thing, place, or procedure	20% -1.38 (0.19) <i>n</i> = 565	22% -1.24 (0.16) <i>n</i> = 565	0.75
To explain or analyze a concept, process, or relationship	28% -0.95 (0.16) <i>n</i> = 565	28% -0.94 (0.17) <i>n</i> = 565	0.94
To make an argument intended to persuade others	12% -1.95 (0.28) <i>n</i> = 565	10% -2.21 (0.31) <i>n</i> = 565	0.61
To gain practice with writing mechanics	24% -1.18 (0.23) <i>n</i> = 565	28% -0.97 (0.20) <i>n</i> = 565	0.57
To gain practice with particular kinds of writing	21% -1.31 (0.18) <i>n</i> = 565	21% -1.30 (0.20) <i>n</i> = 565	0.81
To gain practice with forms of writing encountered on standardized tests	17% -1.56 (0.27) <i>n</i> = 565	17% -1.57 (0.25) <i>n</i> = 565	0.79

Note: To take into account the nesting of teachers in schools, percentages are estimated from a hierarchical model with a logit link function. The logits and standard errors of logits from the model are shown in italics below the estimated percentages.

Source: 2009–10 teacher log, question 5.

\**p* < 0.05.

**Exhibit C-6.24**  
**Percentage of Days that Target Students Were Involved in Collaborative Writing Activities**

Activity	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
The student worked individually	68% <i>0.77</i> <i>(0.13)</i> <i>n = 565</i>	66% <i>0.66</i> <i>(0.13)</i> <i>n = 565</i>	0.55
The student was helping produce a group writing product	10% <i>-2.20</i> <i>(0.21)</i> <i>n = 565</i>	12% <i>-2.01</i> <i>(0.20)</i> <i>n = 565</i>	0.58
The student gave or received help or feedback on individual writing tasks from peers	20% <i>-1.36</i> <i>(0.15)</i> <i>n = 565</i>	19% <i>-1.48</i> <i>(0.17)</i> <i>n = 565</i>	0.80

Note: To take into account the nesting of teachers in schools, percentages are estimated from a hierarchical model with a logit link function. The logits and standard errors of logits from the model are shown in italics below the estimated percentages.

Source: 2009–10 teacher log, question 7.

\**p* < 0.05.

**Exhibit C-6.25**  
**Percentage of Days that Target Students Were Involved in Various Feedback Activities**

Activity	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
Meet individually with the teacher to get oral feedback or discuss how to improve his or her writing	24% <i>-1.15</i> <i>(0.22)</i> <i>n = 565</i>	28% <i>-0.93</i> <i>(0.18)</i> <i>n = 565</i>	0.49
Review written feedback on his or her own writing given by the teacher	7% <i>-2.58</i> <i>(0.27)</i> <i>n = 565</i>	13% <i>-1.87</i> <i>(0.19)</i> <i>n = 565</i>	0.08
Reflect on or evaluate his or her own writing	23% <i>-1.23</i> <i>(0.16)</i> <i>n = 565</i>	28% <i>-0.96</i> <i>(0.15)</i> <i>n = 565</i>	0.18
Share or present his or her own writing to peers (in a pair, small group, or whole class)	35% <i>-0.64</i> <i>(0.12)</i> <i>n = 565</i>	31% <i>-0.78</i> <i>(0.19)</i> <i>n = 565</i>	0.68

Note: To take into account the nesting of teachers in schools, percentages are estimated from a hierarchical model with a logit link function. The logits and standard errors of logits from the model are shown in italics below the estimated percentages.

Source: 2009–10 teacher log, question 8.

\**p* < 0.05.

**Exhibit C-6.26**  
**Percentage of Days that Target Students Engaged in Specific Writing Activities**

Activity	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
Brainstorming or organizing ideas for writing text	42% <i>-0.30</i> <i>(0.17)</i> <i>n = 629</i>	46% <i>-0.15</i> <i>(0.13)</i> <i>n = 639</i>	0.63
Composing text	69% <i>0.79</i> <i>(0.16)</i> <i>n = 629</i>	64% <i>0.59</i> <i>(0.18)</i> <i>n = 639</i>	0.46
Revising text (focused on meaning and ideas)	29% <i>-0.89</i> <i>(0.15)</i> <i>n = 629</i>	31% <i>-0.80</i> <i>(0.13)</i> <i>n = 639</i>	0.74
Editing text (focused on grammar, usage, punctuation, spelling)	32% <i>-0.73</i> <i>(0.16)</i> <i>n = 629</i>	38% <i>-0.48</i> <i>(0.24)</i> <i>n = 639</i>	0.54

Note: To take into account the nesting of teachers in schools, percentages are estimated from a hierarchical model with a logit link function. The logits and standard errors of logits from the model are shown in italics below the estimated percentages.

Source: 2009–10 teacher log, question 9.

\* $p < 0.05$ .

### Exhibit C-6.27

#### Percentage of Days that Target Students Were Exposed to Models of Writing in Specific Ways

Activity	Partnership	Delayed Partnership	<i>p</i> Value
The student did not encounter models of writing today	40% -0.43 (0.16) <i>n</i> = 687	40% -0.39 (0.13) <i>n</i> = 724	0.81
The student listened to the teacher or another student present on what makes particular texts good or poor models of writing	29% -0.91 (0.14) <i>n</i> = 687	27% -0.98 (0.19) <i>n</i> = 724	0.90
The student read well-written texts that were similar to texts students are planning to write or are currently writing.	27% -1.02 (0.15) <i>n</i> = 687	25% -1.13 (0.19) <i>n</i> = 724	0.73
The student analyzed what makes particular texts good or poor models of writing	19% -1.48 (0.18) <i>n</i> = 687	20% -1.41 (0.17) <i>n</i> = 724	0.84
The student used well-written texts or a model-based guide to help plan or compose a text	15% -1.76 (0.17) <i>n</i> = 687	18% -1.54 (0.17) <i>n</i> = 724	0.29

Note: To take into account the nesting of teachers in schools, percentages are estimated from a hierarchical model with a logit link function. The logits and standard errors of logits from the model are shown in italics below the estimated percentages.

Source: 2009–10 teacher log, question 10.

\**p* < 0.05.