

The Red River Valley Writing Project

DPI Project Summary, Scope of Work, and Specific Aims

Objective:

To **improve literacy** and the **teaching of writing** in ND schools (K-College) in all subject areas, through professional development for teachers, continuity programs, and direct work with student writers through youth writing camps, workshops, and competitions. To focus on writers as **informed, intentional, and innovative creators** who can boost North Dakota's economy and enrich civic life.

Project Summary & Scope of Work:

Summer Invitational Leadership Institutes

We provide intensive, 45-hour professional development institutes to North Dakota writing teachers from K-College—led by veteran writing instructors, who demonstrate effective teaching practices and guide participants as they create and refine their own lessons. Our current emphasis has been teaching argument writing using non-fiction texts, with additional emphasis on digital reading-writing situations. We identify and invite the most talented, hard-working teacher participants who have great leadership potential. Our writing project trained teachers often go on to become literacy leaders and coaches for their local schools and districts.

Continuity & Community Writing Programs

We support the continued learning and engagement of both teachers and community members. Teachers who complete our Summer Institute go on to organize and lead writing groups, book discussions, and in-service teaching demonstrations. We also support the community with opportunities to connect and write—for example, our “Pens & Pints” writing pub crawl, “Warrior Words” for military veterans, “Grief and Bereavement” writing, “Novel Writing,” and “Write Across America” writing marathons.

In-service Teacher Trainings and Conference Presentations

We partner with specific schools to evaluate and improve literacy and writing instruction (previous and ongoing partnerships include the Belcourt and Dunseith school districts, Cheney Middle School in West Fargo, and Hatton-Eielson Public Schools). We promote writing across the curriculum (not just in English classes) and give teachers strategies for using writing to enhance learning in all content areas. Our teachers also share these strategies at local and regional conferences, such as ND Council for Teachers of English, ND Multi-tier System of Supports, and the National Writing Project Midwest conferences.

Teen Writing Camps & Workshops

Engages North Dakota's creative young voices in weekly “Word Herd” writing groups, and weeklong summer writing camps, where students work with our teacher-leaders, NDSU creative writing instructors, and guest writers (many top professional writers from our region lead workshops at the camps).

Scholastic Art & Writing Awards

Offers North Dakota's teens (grades 7-12) the opportunity to enter the country's most prestigious and competitive art & writing competition, with thousands of dollars of scholarship money offered at both the state and national levels. We provide publicizing, writing workshops, adjudication, and administrative support for the awards. Additionally, our organization, in partnership with Plains Art Museum, hosts a literary reading event, art exhibition, and state awards ceremony each year to recognize the award recipients. We reach all corners of the state with this program.

Specific Aims:

1. To provide high-quality **teacher training** for using writing to enhance student learning across the curriculum.
2. To increase the quality and quantity of **student writing** done both inside and outside of schools.
3. To enrich our communities and **civic life** through more opportunities to write together and share through writing.