Reading and Writing Project

HOME GROWN
INSTITUTE
OFFERINGS

Each summer we offer many school and district-based institutes—which we call homegrown institutes. These institutes, which happen around the world, live or virtual, may support 20 teachers—or 600. They are designed to create a shared immersion across a district or school, to support site-specific professional learning initiatives and communities of practice, and to give teachers an intense study of state-of-the-art methods and curriculum.

The RWP staff has had lots of experience making live and virtual institutes magical. All of our summer homegrown institutes are four or five days. A school or district may choose to devote a fifth day (which can be Monday or Friday in the summer, or a day in late Spring or early Fall) to planning and/or follow up with administration, coaches, and lead teachers.

After this unusual and challenging year, we are offering a range of special topic homegrown institutes. It is also possible to request an institute on any topic that has been offered at Teachers College, or that will be offered this summer. We can’t promise to be able to staff every request, so we encourage you to reach out soon.

Homegrown Institutes are available for scheduling from the week of June 14 through the week of August 30th. However, during TC Institute weeks (June 21-July 2 and August 2-13) we have less availability. For this reason, please select 3 possible weeks (1st, 2nd, 3rd choice) as soon as possible. To schedule a homegrown institute, please write to Kathy Neville at kathy@readingandwritingproject.org.
If you are looking for a way to renew your school’s commitment to education that is deeply personal and interpersonal, and that engages teachers and students alike, heart and soul, while creating close knit communities within and across classrooms, there are few better ways to accomplish these all-important goals than through a district-based or school-based writing institute.

In this institute, teachers will dive into the research and practice of teaching writing. Participants will be immersed in methods including minilessons, inquiry, small group work, and conferring and will have the opportunity to work on their own skills in writing narrative, information and opinion writing. Participants will study writing progressions, hone skills for assessing and giving feedback, and develop tools that help students self-assess and set goals. Participants will also learn ways that the teaching of writing can be as culturally responsive as possible. In the year ahead, small group work will be especially important; at this institute we’ll help you prepare all-important small groups that give your writing curriculum extra scope, and we’ll help you become adept at designing and leading your own assessment-based small groups. You’ll also become familiar with the range of resources offered by TCRWP, from curriculum to mentor texts to student exemplars. You’ll also explore the ways that digital tools can help young writers thrive. Across this 4-5 day institute, your community will come together to rehearse, plan, and prepare your units of study so that this fall, you’ll be poised to renew your learning communities while also turning your students into engaged and skilled writers.
During Covid, we’ve all been reminded of the all-important work of turning kids into avid readers—because if kids are readers, then good things will follow for them, not only in reading but in world knowledge, in writing, in every subject, really. All too often we act as if it’s just magic that some kids turn out to be avid readers and others resist reading, but the truth is that there are evidenced-based methods for turning kids into avid readers, and when we embrace those methods, the results are not only statistically significant—they are life changing.

In homegrown reading institutes, RWP staff developers join teachers in the joyous (and hard) work of turning kids into readers. You’ll learn how to instill a sense of energy and purpose into a well-run reading workshop. You’ll learn both formal and informal ways to assess readers, and you’ll become accustomed to drawing on the learning progressions and the bands of text complexity (3-8) and research on reading development (K-2) to provide young people with tailored instruction that furthers their growth. Small groups have never been more important than they will be this fall, and you’ll learn ways in which small group instruction can help you provide the pathways forward that your range of readers will need.

You’ll do a deep dive into methods, so that you are confident of your ability to lead concise and engaging minilessons and transformative read alouds. You’ll also become familiar with the range of resources offered by TCRWP, from curriculum to videos to digital text sets and scaffolds. Perhaps most importantly, you’ll have a chance to renew your school’s commitment to education that is deeply personal and interpersonal, culturally responsive, that both engages teachers and students alike and that accelerates readers’ development.
To meet the challenges of ’21-’22, teachers need to be ready to lead state-of-the-art small group instruction in ways that provide cohesive learning pathways for the full range of readers. Meanwhile, we also need to be poised to launch the school year in ways that build a close-knit, trusting, engaged reading community.

In order to lead small groups that are as rich, engaging, and as accelerated as possible, it will be important to develop on-the-run, litmus-paper-like assessments that allow us to quickly get about the business of putting within-reach books into kids’ hands while also determining and breathing life into priority goals. New or streamlined assessment tools will be important, but most of all, teachers will need a firm grasp of reading development, including an understanding of the phonics and fluency development that may traditionally have been supported in younger grades.

You’ll leave this institute with a set of powerful teaching tools for the coming school year, including a knowledge of small groups that you can lead again and again, varying them slightly, as well as go-to methods for making your small groups as lively, engaging, and as positive as possible. We’ll support you in creating or adapting a dozen or so ready-made small group interventions —perhaps creating more short instructional videos and making tiny leave-behind charts as well as devising self-assessment checklists and other tools.

If you are going to accelerate readers’ development, it will be all-important that you help your students access books in which they can see themselves and develop identities as powerful learners. They will need to be reading for purposes that are important to them, within safe, trusting communities. So while supporting you in developing small group instruction, this institute will also help you to make your entire curriculum more affirming, more culturally responsive, more asset-based, and more joyful.
There is literally a mountain of research that supports all kids receiving explicit, systematic phonics instruction as well as coaching to draw on phonics as they read and as they write. Although most schools across the nation have adopted a phonics curriculum—including TCRWP’s Units of Study in Phonics—teachers have often not received the state-of-the-art PD that allows them to teach phonics with confidence, clarity and power. For phonics instruction to work its magic, what’s necessary is a combination of informed curriculum and high quality professional knowledge.

This institute is designed to provide teachers with a knowledge of how kids progress in their knowledge and skills with phonological awareness, concepts of print, letters and sounds, decoding, fluency and vocabulary. That knowledge of development will be especially important in the post-Covid year, as children will come to our classes with strengths and gaps that won’t match those from previous years, and it will be all-important for teachers to be able to conduct on the run, informal, litmus-paper-like assessment that allow for rapid responsiveness and clear prioritization.

It is also important that teachers have a strong command of methods for teaching and coaching phonics. To accelerate kids’ progress in the year ahead and to ensure that all kids develop a strong foundation for reading and writing, it’s important that teachers know the fine points of how to help kids learn their ABCs, their short and long vowels, vowels teams, cumulative blending and the like.

This institute will also help teachers to provision kids with the reading materials that match their needs. Teachers will want to know how to sort through leveled books, identifying those that are decodable enough to be helpful, and those that are best set aside. TCRWP has developed lots of resources, including recommended book lists, and can help you provision your classrooms with the materials that support your early readers in the work they need to be doing.

Never has small group work been more important than it will be in the year ahead. You’ll learn some go-to small groups that will allow you to teach, sing, rhyme, and play games as you channel kids to do the work that will help them practice, master, build upon and apply all-important skills.
This four day institute will offer a rallying cry and a think tank to support teachers and school leaders in rising to the challenge of a new year. RWP staff will work on ways to increase reading and writing volume, deepen engagement, center students’ cultures and interests and their funds of knowledge, and build independence and community at the same time. Teachers will be able to dive deeply into their first units of study, considering ways to get kids thinking, talking, reading, and writing deeply and with joy. All decisions about units, read aloud texts, and mentor texts will be made collaboratively with your teachers, though RWP will bring and share resources, as always.

Before the institute, school and district literacy leaders can engage in a conversation with a RWP leader who will think with (and listen to) local literacy leaders in order to make local decisions about how best to approach the upcoming year, from what units to teach, to considering read aloud and touchstone texts, and so on. How will your particular district or school build on insights and skills, address anticipated challenges, and do the community-building work necessary to help your teachers, families and kids get the best possible start in the fall? We expect this conversation to be a couple of hours, and it will be with a senior staff developer who is teaching the institute or a RWP leader.

Once district and teacher leaders have settled on guiding principles that take advantage of new strengths such as a more intensive connections with families, new access to technology, and new knowledge about reading development, it will be important for teachers to have support translating the district’s or school’s guiding principles (and teachers’ hopes) into grade-specific plans for reading/phonics and/or writing. The institute will help teachers reimagine the year ahead in ways that use their new strengths (and kids’ new strengths and genius) and that address opportunity gaps and challenges. Time will be spent adapting upcoming units of study, planning interventions and scaffolds, choosing texts, developing new tools, and above all, remembering the deep satisfaction of working shoulder to shoulder within a close-knit community of practice.

We have planned this institute to focus on writing or reading.

COMING BACK FROM COVID

Structures, Methods, and Curriculum to Turn All Students into Writers

Grades: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12
Planning is crucial to the success of any teaching and learning opportunity. This summer, districts across the world will be sponsoring all-important summer institutes for students and the planning of these institutes will need to be priority. Summer programs can either be times when kids sit in school and wish they were elsewhere, or they can be a time when kids fall more in love with reading and writing, raise their voices, find that their ideas are heard, and become more confident and skilled. RWP wants to offer our assistance, and we expect the details of this to emerge through consultation.

Imagine this: Perhaps two RWP leaders work with your district to examine data, consider priorities, hopes and constraints, and with our help, the district designs a very rough plan for summer school. Your partners from RWP might then consider our virtual curriculum (2500+ videoed sessions) and our resources (cumulative phonics reviews, decodable books, texts sets) and also learn about your district’s resources, and work together to create a summer school curriculum that is supported by resources such as videos, unit-plans, and the like.

Of course, the above can be done in an abbreviated fashion, with RWP simply helping a district or a grade-level team to sift through curricular options, structures, and tools that might engage students in work they find significant and joyful, while also building lasting literacy skills.

Ideally, the summer’s teaching experience can become something of a lab-site, and teachers who teach together can do so as a collaborative community of practice. With support from district coaches/lead teachers and TC staff developers, the summer school could become a time to pilot new methods, to induct new teachers, to explore more diverse books, and to perfect small groups that will also be all-important for the fall.

You’ll have the opportunity to study the work of prior grades and, for enrichment, grade levels above, to plan small group work that can accelerate your students’ growth.
A DEEP DIVE INTO NONFICTION READING, CURATED TEXT SETS, BUILDING KNOWLEDGE, AND RESEARCH SKILLS.

For ELA and Content Teachers

In this nonfiction institute, you’ll study the latest research on nonfiction reading and knowledge building. You’ll learn how to orient students to a new topic in such a way that they build their own background knowledge (their command of key vocabulary and important concepts) right from the start. You’ll study some high-leverage instruction that helps kids apply that knowledge to fresh texts and fresh learning experiences. You’ll also study note-taking habits that make a difference, especially when kids are reading across texts.

The goal of this institute is to breathe new intensity and energy into the nonfiction reading, research, and knowledge construction your students do in any content. The ways that we research are changing, with access to information, and the ways we absorb information, becoming more reliant on digital texts and the internet. That means that we need to teach kids digital literacy, as well as ethical research skills—while supporting their comprehension. At the same time, we want to teach kids to find their own interests and passions, to follow their curiosity, and to see themselves as active agents in learning about and changing the world. Join RWP in shifting the ways that kids and teachers see nonfiction reading and research.

Grades: 3-5, 6-12
In this institute, you’ll get a solid grounding in the structures and methods of book clubs. You’ll learn to plan effective read aloud sessions to anchor your unit of study, and to tie those texts and teaching to your minilessons. You’ll learn how to get kids into clubs so that they feel a sense of agency. You’ll learn how to coach kids through small group work, while they are in their clubs. You’ll also study and practice the writing about reading that can play such an important part of book clubs.

As part of the work of the institute, we’ll help you prepare for your teaching, so that you not only have rehearsed some of the minilessons and read alouds that will anchor your book club units, you’ll have a chance to plan some high-leverage small group work. You’ll study the progressions and tools that can help students self-assess their literary conversations and writing about reading, so that they can better advance their work.

You’ll find inside this institute that you are immersed in a beautiful exploration of reading workshop, instructional methods, and the joy of reading with others. You’ll learn to help students see mirrors and windows in the books they read, you’ll learn to help them listen to and consider the perspectives of various people—in short, you’ll learn to help kids read and live with more alertness and awareness.