



# We Write!

## About the Young Writers Project online classroom

Writing is an essential skill that helps students learn, articulate their thoughts and develop confidence and self-esteem. The majority of Vermont students do not write at a proficient level, according to the latest tests. YWP has found that many students are disengaged from writing because they think it's pointless and unimportant. To help counter these trends, YWP offer *We Write!*, an exciting program that provides students with a comfortable writing medium, a purpose to their writing and a chance to learn from and about each other. The program magnifies the effectiveness of instruction by teachers and makes better use of class writing time. It also allows for students to easily revise their work.



**How it Works:** YWP builds, supports and maintains customized, private Web sites for individual schools to fold into their curricula. Teachers assign work, provide feedback and assess students' portfolios. Students complete assignments, share additional writing, give and receive peer-to-peer feedback and view teachers' comments. Students can incorporate other digital technology – visual art, audio and video – into their writing projects and can collaborate with others.

As part of this service, YWP provides:

- A safe, **easy-to-use Web site** that can be modified to teachers' needs;
- **Training** to teachers and students to use the site and use other digital technologies;
- Several in-class writing workshops on **topics** designated by the teachers during the year;
- **Online feedback** from a trained student mentor assigned to the school;
- **Best-practice ideas for instruction of writing** and using the site to stimulate writing;
- A **survey** to gauge how students' attitudes about writing changed during the year; and
- **Support** for getting students' best work presented in public or published in external media.

The We Write! program is an affordable and collaboratively structured approach to improve writing skills: YWP works with teachers and schools to adapt to their styles and needs; our service is intended to complement teachers' work not replace it. YWP pays a small stipend to one teacher in each school to act as a liaison.

More than 500 students and several dozen teachers have participated and their observations provide insight into the impact of the We Write! program:

- Students like the socialization of writing and enjoy writing more than before;
- Peer-to-peer commenting helps develop students' critical thinking and sets a tone for civil discourse;
- Students of all levels and interests write more and better because their audience is their peers;
- Disengaged students participate actively;
- Students gain a new respect and understanding of each other; and
- Teachers say the We Write! program makes their instruction more effective and efficient.

Academic studies show today's students are far ahead of most schools in using digital technology to learn. Yet, students need digital literacy skills more than ever. We Write! offers an intuitive, innovative method for teachers to incorporate the Web and digital technology into the classroom.

Contact Geoffrey Gevalt, YWP Director, at [ggevalt@youngwritersproject.org](mailto:ggevalt@youngwritersproject.org) or at the address and phone below for more. Visit [youngwritersproject.org/wewrite](http://youngwritersproject.org/wewrite) for examples of student writing from the We Write! sites and a short video of student reaction to the We Write! program.