

**Creating a Team of Teacher Leaders in Remote Schools and Local Communities:  
The Yellowstone Writing Project's *New Pathway to Leadership***

Allison Wynhoff Olsen & Kirk Branch  
with Alan Hoffmann, Amber Henwood, Hali Kirby, Cassandra Moos, Tyrel Shannon,  
Peter Strand, and Nigel Waterton

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## Introduction

“PacMan.”

That, in its entirety, opened the sharing portion of the Writing Marathon during the Day of Writing at the K-12 school in Savage, Montana, on May 17, 2017. But that elementary student who proudly recited his one word piece opened the door for more readers than the day’s schedule could accommodate. In the school gym, students and teachers from across the school read something they’d written that morning as we’d wandered, in small groups, through the streets of the community, from the porch of the tavern to the fire station to the museum.

The full Day of Writing - starting with a prompt in the gym, followed by the Writing Marathon, lunch, a math relay, and writing stations throughout the school in the afternoon - culminated months of planning by the four Savage teachers who comprised the on-site Leadership Team for Yellowstone Writing Project’s New Pathways to Leadership Grant. Montana Governor Steve Bullock, in honor of the work in Savage, proclaimed May 17 a statewide Day of Writing, and U.S. Senator Jon Tester provided a brief celebratory statement written specifically for the Savage School. This school event took place roughly halfway into the two years we’d planned to work within the school.

This Day of Writing highlighted two of the key values that shaped the work of the Yellowstone Writing Project in Savage. First, we wanted our work with the on-site Leadership Team - Teacher Consultants in training - to celebrate writing across the school. Students embraced the Writing Marathon, and they cheered and laughed together as students shared what they’d written. Second, we knew our work in Savage had to be grounded in the local community, and the Writing Marathon took that celebration into the community of just over 700 people,

drawing curiosity and questions from Savage residents. We'll highlight these two values throughout this resource as aspects we recommend other sites keep in mind in similar projects.

Our purpose in this resource is to provide, if not a precise road map to replicate our process, at least some guidelines and considerations another site might use to attempt a similar project. Just as a map of Savage would be of no value in navigating a different town, we know that anytime we, or another site, set out to develop a new group of Teacher Consultants in a small and remote rural school district, we'll have to negotiate different constraints and enact as-of-yet-unconsidered tactics. But in our quest to expand the Yellowstone Writing Project network in a sustainable way to a place far distant from our Bozeman, Montana, home, we learned a great deal that will shape how we do this work in the future. Here, we'll offer some reflections about our process that we hope will encourage others to develop similar goals for their own site.

From the beginning, we've operated with a clear sense that YWP needed to learn a new place to do this work successfully. Everything about the area in Eastern Montana where Savage is located - the geography, the economy, the population, the politics - is vastly different from Bozeman (pop. 45,250) and the Gallatin Valley (pop. 100,739). Savage, Montana (pop. 714), is 360 miles northeast of Bozeman. It's almost halfway between Glendive (pop. 5,332) and Sidney (pop. 6,566), the two largest cities near Savage. Savage is surrounded by ranches and sugar beet farms, and the Yellowstone River winds by on the east. This part of Montana is well into the prairie, and the views stretch for miles in either direction, the most prominent feature being the bluffs a few miles to the east. Sidney is on the outer edge of the Bakken oil field that extends from the Dakotas into Eastern Montana, and the city experienced the boom and bust associated with the region, which also affected Savage.

We've tried, in this resource, to capture as many voices and perspectives as we can. This experience has been, in many ways, a lesson in point of view for all of us. One of the underlying ideas guiding this resource is that our YWP team could never become experts on the Savage school, that the knowledge we would have to rely on exists within the teachers, staff, and students of the school. Our hope is to represent as fully as possible the voices of the teachers from Savage and others involved in this project.

The Yellowstone Writing Project located our work in Savage, rather than maintaining the MSU or Bozeman hub. Making the drive - and sometimes the flight - from the mountains to the plains reminded us just how far teachers in this region must travel for professional development opportunities often centered in the central and western parts of the state. For most of that journey, we followed the trajectory of the Yellowstone River, winding northeast to meet the Missouri River in North Dakota, Yellowstone becoming a geographic as well as an institutional connection. This resource also reflects that shift away from YWP's professional home: We thus locate this resource as much as possible within Savage.

### **Project Timeline**

As a touchstone for this resource, we provide here a timeline for this project, with a table for quick reference in Appendix 1. We first made contact with the Savage School in May 2015 (see next section) when English teacher Alan Hoffmann reached out seeking guidance about a schoolwide writing curriculum. However, the logistics—and the cost—of designing such a program made planning difficult, and we jumped on the New Pathways to Leadership Grant opportunity as a means to help us grow our leadership and move forward with this project.

Our first visit to the school came in May of 2016, when three of us—Kirk, Allison, and Hali—presented what we called a “Celebration of Writing” to highlight the interesting work with

writing already happening within the school; we also spent a day meeting teachers, visiting classrooms, and working to develop an on-site leadership team. That summer, we met several times online with Savage teachers and the YWP team, as preparation for the Fall PIR day, which came at the end of September and which was largely facilitated by the YWP team. We met online with various members of our full team several times over the fall to continue designing the next stage.

In January 2017, Allison, Amber, Cassandra and Peter traveled to New Orleans to work with other New Pathways sites on the next stage of the grant. Following that, the Savage team designed and implemented (with the assistance of several more online meetings with the full team) what they called “the Carnival of Writing” but what came to be known over time as “The Day of Writing.”

In the summer of 2017, after some preparation through online meetings, we held a Writing Retreat in a meeting room at the The Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center in North Dakota to write together as a group and to plan the Fall 2017 teacher in-service (PIR) day, which would be run entirely by the Savage teachers. A few more online meetings helped us continue preparing for the September PIR day, and at the end of September, the Savage team led a PIR day focused on the full school project, called “Landscapes of Savage.” We concluded the grant-funded portion of our work by bringing seven members of our team to the NWP Annual Meeting in St. Louis, followed by two members of the Savage team presenting on our work work in a session on rural teaching at the NCTE conference. While the grant-funded portion of our work with Savage has concluded, the work with, and in, the Savage School and beyond will continue. We’ll examine many of these key events in more detail throughout this resource.

## Our New Pathways Beginning

Alan Hoffmann (Inset 1) provides the origin story for our New Pathways to Leadership Grant. The belief that the creation of a writing program in the school should be, in Nigel's words back to Alan, "home-grown," has driven our work. As Alan wrote in another piece, much of the excitement of this project has been about the creativity and invention: "Don't do this thing that everyone else does. Let's do something different. Let's make it for Savage, about Savage. None of this cookie cutter bullshit, let's do writing that works for us!" At the outset, we imagined this as a unique and new, albeit still short-term, professional development opportunity: We would assist a small school in developing a schoolwide approach to writing in a small rural school.

### **Inset 1: Alan Hoffmann**

My first year of teaching, I struggled to get through each day. Having seven preps and building a curriculum from scratch is stressful. It was during this time that Lynne Peterson, the superintendent, came to me to talk about writing. "How is the writing of the students?" she asked. I responded that writing was not a strong suit for our students. There were, of course, bright spots with writers, but as a whole, I did not think we were where we wanted to be. Lynne wanted a school-wide curriculum. "I want you to do some research into what we could do K-12. Maybe look at Step Up to Writing and let me know what you think."

I did not know where to start with said research, so I went to the MSU English Education Facebook Group and posted the following, "I have been tasked with looking into implementing [a specific pro-formulated writing program] for our school district. I was wondering if anyone here has experiences with the program and how it has gone. Or, if anyone has suggestions for a writing program that might work, I'd like that as well. Savage doesn't really have a writing program or curriculum, and so we are trying to figure out a way to help improve writing through all grades. Thank you for your help!"

A few minutes later, one of my professors, Nigel Waterton responded, "I'd avoid it. It's too formulaic." He gave some background on [that program] and why he didn't like it, but then concluded his comment by saying, "The shameless marketing ploy: if you want to talk about getting someone from the Yellowstone Writing Project to come over & help y'all work up a writing program for your school/district, I know people... But it would be home-grown."

And so began the partnership between the Yellowstone Writing Project and Savage Public School. Nigel's comment also cuts to the heart of what this project has been about. We are trying to develop a writing program that is made to fit Savage. It isn't being adapted from a

large school, it isn't even anything that another small school said worked for them. It is an attempt to create a writing program (or, I think more accurately, a writing culture) that is made for Savage.

The New Pathways Grant, however, shifted our perspective on this project in ways that we have only begun to fully understand. When we initially applied for the grant, we saw it as a useful tool that would help us create a school-wide approach to writing, with the exciting side benefit of creating new leadership in the region for the Yellowstone Writing Project. Through our work in Savage, we've reversed that priority, recognizing the development of the new Teacher Consultants as the most important outcome, with an exciting side benefit of creating new approaches to writing across the Savage School. That shift in perspective is also an important theme throughout this resource, because it has helped us imagine—beyond what we'd proposed in our grant application—how our site might work differently into the future, and how we might continue to build our leadership from within schools, rather than from the Montana State University Campus.

We knew from previous work with teachers from rural districts that when they returned as the singular YWP teacher in their school, distant from other TCs in the site and our campus center, the energy and momentum coming from the ISI quickly dissipated. We hoped that by working with a group of teachers within a particular school—in effect building a community within the school enacting some of our site values—we could help sustain that momentum and energy for those teachers. Our longer term goal is to collaborate with the four teachers from Savage to create a similar experience in another rural school within the same region, thus creating a stronger base for the Yellowstone Writing Project in that portion of Montana (and creating a small regional network of TCs who can network and collaborate, particularly if/when teachers move to different schools as jobs change).



## **Selecting the YWP Rural Team**

We started by choosing a YWP team who would get to know the Savage School over time, support a on-site Leadership Team and other teachers there, welcome new TCs to the site, and enact a PD structure as a prototype for rural site network development. A next step was creating a team of teachers within the Savage School District. It was our goal to build a team of teachers across grade levels, in effort to filter in conversations, programs, and curricular goals across the K-12 span. Aware that no teacher in the district has a grade level or disciplinary colleague, we were fortunate that due to the school's small nature, we had representation across content areas as well.

**YWP directors & TCs.** Kirk Branch is a director and founder of the Yellowstone Writing Project and Chair of the English Department at Montana State University. He has helped design and implement Professional Development projects in multiple schools and has taught adults in numerous settings and capacities. He has worked with secondary English teachers in Indonesia and Nepal to help them introduce more writing into their curricula, and he is a scholar of literacy and pedagogy.

Allison Wynhoff Olsen is a director of the Yellowstone Writing Project and an Assistant Professor of English Education in the English Department at Montana State University. She previously taught high school English in rural areas of Minnesota and worked on a K-12 literacy team. She has worked in numerous high school classrooms to study how teachers and students co-construct argumentation and do argumentative writing and is also a scholar of rural English teaching.

Hali Kirby has taught 9-12 English at Gardiner Public Schools for 18 years. Over the course of her career, she has worked to develop curricula that emphasizes the value of local

learning opportunities within English Language Arts and hopes to provide Professional Development for teachers also interested in developing their own community-centered lessons. She has been on the YWP Leadership Team since the site's founding in 2009.

Peter Strand teaches fifth grade at Bozeman's Irving School. His focus is history and all things literacy. Peter has guided teachers in Montana, Colorado, and Virginia to explore everything from using biography to animate American history, to using writer's notebooks to spur passion for learning, to building simulations of the national political process in primary classrooms. Peter is a proud member of the Holocaust Education Network, which has inspired him to consider the essence of what it is to teach, and his most recent classroom efforts involve weaving Arabic instruction into classroom life.

Nigel Waterton teaches courses in English secondary teaching methods, classroom management, education history, policy, & law, and administrates and instructs a first-year seminar program for teaching majors at Montana State University. He taught secondary English for 14 years, most recently at the Bridger Alternative Program in Bozeman. He studies teacher feedback to student writing, the role of autonomy in student writing and teacher professional identity, and the effects of school structures on students, particularly marginalized populations.

**Savage team.** Alan Hoffmann teaches English, grades 7-12, and is in his fourth year of teaching. This project, he noted, has helped his leadership skills: "Our leadership team and the YWP team have given me a great place to learn how to be a leader, and I am surrounded by excellent examples of what great teacher leaders can be. The development of teacher leaders is, I believe, just as important as the curriculum we teach." He has been excited to see how the project has worked in Savage: "We are navigating towards our goal of making writing more accessible

and less daunting for everyone in Savage. We are changing the culture in Savage. It's happening and it is exciting."

Amber Henwood has taught social studies and history in the Savage secondary school for three years. "Prior to my work with the Yellowstone Writing Project," Henwood wrote, "writing in my classroom was very structured and focused on technique. Spelling, grammar, punctuation, citing sources properly...it all mattered." Her experience on the leadership team at Savage, however, has led her to be "a lot more apt to just let students write and not be as concerned with the technicalities... As I went along with the process I realized that this project is about so much more than those technicalities. It's about integrating writing into everything we do as educators and then in turn teaching our students to do the same." Amber also received a grant from the Montana Historical Society, in Helena, to do archival research on Savage, material she made available for the schoolwide "Landscapes of Savage" project.

Cassandra Moos has been the K-12 art instructor at Savage Public School for 5 1/2 years. One of only three teachers who have the K-12 spectrum of students in the District, Cassandra has helped connect the elementary, junior high, and high school needs. She has consistently incorporated writing into arts education. Cassandra wrote, "Because of this opportunity to be a part of the YWP leadership team, I feel like I am allowing myself to be a leader that a teacher needs to be. I'm investing my time in the town where I work, I'm creating connections with all of our team leaders and we are getting to know each other as professionals on an equal level, but also as people who happen to have similar beliefs and are dedicated to bettering our students."

Tyrel Shannon teaches third grade and is in his second year teaching in Savage; he has four years total teaching experience. Tyrel was the last member of the on-site team, joining at the beginning of his first year at Savage. Since then, his abilities to lead have become clear. He

began the 2017-2018 year sharing that his role on our team is making him “feel empowered and useful” as a colleague. Tyrel has also written about a shift in how he thinks about, experiences, and teaches writing. He wrote, “I was shocked when some of my class last year got up and shared what they had written at the writing day. This made me think that with a little more positive reinforcement and time to write freely and no judgment from me, students like writing at this age a lot more than I did.”

### **Core Values Guiding our New Pathway to Leadership**

Throughout our project, we have centered on two core values: (1) Celebrating writers and writing and (2) embedding our practices in the local. In this section, we illustrate each value through key events and excerpts of team members’ writing. We’ll follow it by a description of the “Day of Writing,” an event that enacted both these values. It is our intent to explicate our experiences across multiple perspectives, using various authorial insets, with particular emphasis on how our four teacher leaders from Savage wrote about and experienced our pathway.

#### **Celebrating Writers and Writing**

Celebrating writers and writing is, of course, a core National Writing Project value, enacted through rituals like Author’s Chair and regular writing and sharing. We emphasized it in Savage as a professional development strategy as well, a means to address what we knew might be resistance or at least skepticism to university outsiders coming into the school with ideas about writing. Celebrating writers and writing also has a corollary—withholding negative judgment - that equally, and sometimes with difficulty—shaped our work. We’ll explore both in this section.

**“Celebration of Writing” workshop.** To prepare for our first visit to Savage, we used a technique we’ve developed for workshops our YWP site has done for high schools in and around

the Gallatin Valley. From as many teachers as possible at a given school, we collect writing assignments with student responses and teacher reflections. We look for writing assignments and subsequent student writing that address particular teaching goals of the instructor, generate interesting intellectual work, and focus on content and thinking. In the workshops, we show that writing back to teachers, celebrating it for what it does, as part of our opening session. In one school, we highlighted reflections students wrote about their recent choir performance, describing anxieties and highlights—missed notes, pre-concert jitters, the feeling of working together as a group. These papers, the choir teacher told us, taught her more about student experiences as performers than anything she'd done before.

We came to these workshops with a simple mantra: Assess for what you want to assess. Those handwritten pieces from the choir students had plenty of spelling mistakes and inconsistent punctuation, but because those were not connected to her assignment goals, the teacher didn't have to focus on those. We wanted teachers to think about how writing assignments might help them meet their own teaching goals, which meant that, for most of them, they had to curb the impulse to mark errors and instead pay attention to student thinking, ideas, and expression. We wanted to openly value student writers in ways that made concerns and anxiety about correctness at least secondary.

We used the same process for our first meeting in Savage, collecting as much writing as we could across grade levels, naming our first meeting there "Celebration of Writing." We highlighted pieces from preschool through third grades and 10th-11th grades. In the 10th grade, students designed a cover for a novel and justified their choices, requiring a visual and written analysis of the book. From the second grade, we noticed how one student resisted the space limitations on his pre-designed worksheet by writing in smaller and smaller print to include more

text. From 11th grade art, a student working with pastels described choices he'd made in an assignment to design a hot air balloon that represented who he was. We emphasized the ways assignments reinforced content goals, fostered creative and thoughtful responses, and encouraged a variety of media. In so doing, we opened conversation about what writing looks like across classrooms and alleviated many teachers' concerns and ways of thinking about what counts as good and bad writing.

The context for the YWP team, however, here was new: we were far out of our region, working in a school with no TCs on the faculty. During this first celebration of writing at Savage, Allison, Kirk, and Hali gave feedback about the assignments and the writing across various grade levels. Hali noted that “we've all witnessed the disrespect, the rejection, the we-know-more mindset that so often defines” professional development encounters, so we assumed that the Savage teachers would expect us to demonstrate what was lacking in the assignments or the writing or, more likely, both. We simply refused to start, or proceed, from a model that presumed a deficit or a problem needing fixing. This remains perhaps the critical and most vital perspective guiding our work: do not fix anything, do not tell anyone they are doing something wrong, do not offer tips on how teachers might improve. That first meeting, as we had done in the past, we simply showed some wonderful writing—lively, smart, engaged, and addressing specific content goals. We didn't critique anything.

Our impetus here, then, wasn't simply to celebrate writing – it was to celebrate writers and teachers, and we used that celebration as an overt strategy to address the expectations we know teachers often have for professional development sessions. We wrote into the session, shared writing, and then offered a presentation of what we found wonderful in the samples collected. While celebration permeated the meeting, it was clear that not all the teachers were

comfortable with this approach; however, as Alan wrote (Inset 2), it was an important beginning to lay a foundation of respect for the teachers' approaches and their students' written responses. Working with that original sampling of assignments and writing began to make visible the writing culture in the Savage School District.

**Inset 2: Alan Hoffmann**

I remember our faculty meeting during that visit. The YWP folks started the meeting, as they always do, with a writing prompt. I think this caught the other teachers off guard. Many teachers didn't even have paper. I remember our science teacher asked for paper from someone else, and I think she ended up writing her reflection on a post-it note. The prompt asked us to write about what we will have done over the summer (a slight twist from the typical, *What did you do over summer vacation?*). I remember that a few teachers shared their writing. I was accustomed to such things, but I imagine for them it was a surreal experience. Sharing writing is hard. I have been on writing marathons with other teachers of writing and have seen these teachers shy away when people ask if anyone wants to share. Even among our colleagues, sharing can be hard. Maybe writing is the easy part, declaring yourself to be a writer, to stand up and say, "I belong to the tribe of writers" the part takes commitment and courage.

After the sharing of writing, the YWP group celebrated the writing that our students were already doing. They recognized that we had some very talented writers, and some excellent writing teachers. They showcased writing across grades and classes. This also is important in trying to understand what this project is about. This has never been about what we were doing wrong or how we can totally revamp our writing curriculum. It has been more about addressing the culture of writing and making writing more accessible to students and teachers alike.

**Withholding of negative judgment.** There is a corollary value to the celebration of writing: it is, at the same time, a withholding of negative judgment, and this, it's safe to say, occasionally tested all of us involved in the project. We experienced this most particularly when we realized that many elementary teachers reacted to our discussions of writing in the school with anxiety and frustration. Peter had prepared us for this, noting that in his experience elementary teachers are often nervous about teaching writing incorrectly, about not focusing on what is important, about sending forward children who are unprepared for their next grade level

or benchmarks. Not unexpectedly, then, many elementary teachers at Savage wanted more than the sort of open-ended and student-focused approaches to writing we led with from the site. They wanted an approach to literacy instruction in general, to reading and writing in combination, something more directive that outlined grade-level expectations and benchmarks and gave them specific learning and teaching goals that would extend through the elementary years; in short, they wanted a fixed elementary literacy program.

We first suggested an elementary program endorsed by the National Writing Project, “Being a Writer.” Workshop-based, approachable, blending reading and writing with specifications for grade-levels and clear directions for teachers, with a collection of master texts (complete, not excerpted, children’s books), “Being a Writer” provided a manageable curricular program with a visible and student-focused pedagogical philosophy. We hoped this program would give the teachers enough to hold onto, as well as engage them in approaches to teaching writing based in writing project values. The teachers, however, chose a different program, one we found less in keeping with the values about writing we hoped the school would embrace. (We’ve left out the program name in Insets 3 and 4.) We offer perspectives on this moment in our practice from both Peter Strand and Tyrel Shannon, because they highlight the difficulty as well as the importance of withholding negative judgement.



### **Inset 3: Peter Strand**

Confronting the anti-teacher mentality alive in basals has been at the core of my teaching identity since first I took the reins of a classroom. And through my career, I have witnessed how damaging such tools become. Openly, they work to diminish teacher agency and professional decision-making. How can I hold myself together and not argue, not push, not stand up openly and strongly in support of professionalism?

I call Tyrel to inquire about the development. He speaks of young teachers feeling overwhelmed with their jobs, of the need to leave work at the end of the day without feeling that sufficient learning is out of reach. With this new, all-inclusive scope and sequence [embedded within a program], all aspects of literacy instruction would be covered. And with the responsibility for lesson and unit design outsourced, the stress would diminish. Tyrel continues: Our children need to learn to use a textbook, something they will need to depend on even through college. I listen with deep appreciation and understanding: I know what it's like to feel overwhelmed in a classroom by the mandates, the unrealistic expectations, the worries, the hopes, the concerns, the finger-pointing. Subtly, I ask questions, point out drawbacks, suggest alternatives. No luck. Tyrel and his colleagues are moving forward.

I can be forceful in conversations, but somehow I conclude the conversation politely. I wonder whether I've left Tyrel resenting me, resenting what the YWP is bringing to his school. Certainly, he read my judgment between the lines. This is not where I wanted the conversation to go. We have to support the decision. This is about agency after all, and these teachers have asserted their wishes honestly and openly.

With the conversation concluded, I begin questioning the entirety of what our Pathway seeks to accomplish. I reach out to others on the team with my frustration, with worry that we have lost our way, that our mission has failed. I feel pessimism. How can we get teachers to take charge when they choose to do the reverse? On the other hand, Tyrel, a shy voice from months earlier, when first we met, has now confronted administrators and confident outsiders, and asserted the voice of his colleagues. And the result is that he has succeeded. If this isn't a key hallmark of TC development, I don't know what is.

When next I return to Savage, I witness Tyrel speaking forcefully among his colleagues. He stands before his staff, in a presentation, tall and forceful, open with opinions. He communicates at length about approaches to reaching students and finding growth. His peers, who need convincing, take notice. There is humor as well. Is this the same teacher I met a year earlier? Though, yes, this man had asserted himself by pursuing all-inclusive textbooks and indirectly subtracting teacher decision-making from the educational equation—*somehow, in the background, he had discovered his potency as an educator*. Though the standardized textbook remains in use, his movement toward self-trust, toward independence, toward belief in his own creative possibilities bodes well. Tyrel is well on the road to becoming a TC.

So, the uptake of all this for me is that *trust* must be the bedrock of our work in promoting change. This trust is so important that it must remain sturdy, even when choices are witnessed that run directly counter to Project philosophy.

We all understand this at some level, of course. Open, generous belief in the teachers we help will spur risk-taking and success. Our job is to sit in the background: listening, supporting, and offering suggestions when requested.

#### **Inset 4: Tyrel Shannon**

The literacy program [not the one YWP recommended] looked like something I could get used to and the more I skimmed the more I liked the idea of having a teacher's book that helped walk me through what I teach with different ideas that help integrate a variety of learning styles into my classroom. It is a fast-paced curriculum, which in the end leaves it open for teachers to decide what is needed to reinforce learning and what part could be omitted.

There were some doubts about the curriculum, mostly about time management. According to the book, we were supposed to do one lesson a day, but the way the lessons were laid out, there was no way we could do that, not even in the hour long reading time. The textbook made it look and sound like on the first read, the teacher reads some, then the students take turns, yet the reading level of these books was so high that many of the students could not read them fluently, therefore comprehension was lost. In a second training, we learned instead that the teacher reads the entire first read, and on the second read we weren't supposed to read the whole section again. We were to only read parts, sometimes a sentence or a paragraph, sometimes a page and answer some questions. This change made the reading day go so much smoother, and I was able to get farther into the lesson. Now we cruise through reading, really diving in deep and getting connected with the books and writing about the books, imagining we are a character in the book and how would we solve a problem.

Yes, it went against the curriculum the YWP team had chosen for us and pushed for us to try, but we as an elementary staff needed something concrete, something to hold and get our hands on. Not all teachers feel themselves as expert writers; in fact unless I have misjudged my fellow colleagues here, none of them feel they are adequate in their own writing; therefore, how could they teach it to the kids without professional help from a professionally written curriculum that helps guide them?

In many ways, this conflict Peter and Tyrel describe is unresolved in our work with Savage. The YWP team remains unenthusiastic, for pedagogical reasons, about the program the teachers chose, and we see the values that program promotes as different from our site and

national values about writing in elementary classrooms. But this helped us better understand the limits of our site relationship with the school and reoriented us more particularly toward the development of the Savage Teaching Fellows. We offer this example here to demonstrate the complexity of working as writing project site within a small school, and the flexibility and compromise that will be required as a site navigates a new context.

While the tension remains unresolved, this experience also helped shift our project priorities. YWP's work in Savage taught us that the cultivation of those leaders was the most sustainable and exciting outcome; how wonderful, too, that it might have a positive, even lasting effect on the culture of writing in the Savage School. Watching the teachers on the Savage leadership team develop as leaders –gain the confidence to lead a PIR day within their own school, connect with our YWP team, directly influence the approaches to writing across the school, grow as writers and readers and become TCs of the Yellowstone Writing Project – taught us the power of the work we were doing, helped us imagine the deep potential of the extended site network these new TCs would help us create. We believe that there would be no way to do work like this in a small rural school without experiencing the sorts of conflict reflected in Peter's and Tyrel's narratives; what matters is that those conflicts ultimately did not distract us from our more compelling and generative work.

### **Embedding our Practices in the Local**

As our pathway developed, our four local leaders took over the process, developing their own agency to direct our new pathway in critical ways: put another way, the Savage team stopped asking about how we needed to complete the New Pathways Grant and moved into developing their own K-12 approaches for their colleagues and students. Since Savage cherishes celebrations, they began to imagine projects that would be fun and would highlight Savage in

and beyond the school. Cassandra (Inset 5) describes the genesis of the “Day of Writing,” which began when she and Amber attended the New Pathways meeting in New Orleans with Allison and Peter.

#### **Inset 5: Cassandra Moos**

As our group of four began working more and more with our YWP team over video conferencing, we began to feel like leaders, but really didn’t know where to head in creating our curriculum or leading our other teachers forward with us. We had endless possibilities ahead of us, but it was too daunting a task to narrow them down, that and we always discussed options but never went anywhere with them. How were we going to develop a K-12 curriculum if we couldn’t even get started with anything?

That changed when Ms. Henwood and I attended the New Pathways Phase I meeting in New Orleans. It was a nice change going from ten below and winter roads to upper seventies and summer-like atmosphere. We had no idea what we were going to be doing but felt that the change of location and climate might help us move forward.

Among other groups from across the country, we heard their stories, their goals, and their plans to reach their end results. Our minds finally started to process what we were doing, why we were there, and most importantly, why we needed to be a part of something like this. Hearing some of the obstacles other groups were having and thinking about options with a room full of great minds started putting us at ease about some of the overall hesitations we’d had previously.

At some point, we realized that we needed to plan something. It didn’t have to be big, but it needed to be exciting and fun, amazing for our students and easy for our staff. It wasn’t the beginning of a K-12 writing curriculum, but it was something to warm kids up to writing. Instead of making it a part of the many things they *had* to learn, why not make it something fun and something they *got* to do. We could ease the students into wanting to write and enjoying the task rather than dreading it like most of them do at all ages. If we could get them to have fun with writing, then it wouldn’t be such a daunting task for teachers to teach it.

Ms. Henwood and I examined the school calendar for the remaining four months of school. We knew they would fly by so whatever we did needed to be planned as soon as we got back. As we accounted for our track and music schedules, we realized that the only time open was the last full day of school. Our seniors wouldn’t be around, but our track students would, and during this time, teachers struggle to have something for the kids to do: the cleaning has been done, there’s only a half day left the following day, and it’s hard to drag anything past the last Friday of school. We would actually be doing the teachers a favor by having something fun planned for them and the students. For the first time since being a part of the YWP I felt like we were doing something, on a path that would lead towards something that would *happen*,

rather than something hypothetical we talked about during our monthly video conferences.

After Cassandra and Amber returned with a concrete idea for a full school event, the Savage team began meeting regularly. Instead of sending quick query emails to their colleagues, they set up listening meetings so teachers could give input, ask questions, and express concerns. Our full team meetings shifted into update sessions that allowed the local leaders to share their progress and solicit advice on any sticking points.

Once the Savage leadership team shifted into event planning, centered on cross-curricular, multi-age, community-based experiences with writing, success was imminent. The more the local team became the face of YWP in Savage, the more successful our new pathway became. Given how much professional development typically comes from outside of a school, this turning inward, to the people who are in the space, can be uncomfortable. Teachers aren't accustomed to being professionalized in this way and yet, this experience has affirmed (again) that in talking with one another about their own and shared experiences, teachers will create their own answers befitting their students and community. When we give teachers permission to validate their understanding and ways of knowing, they begin to honor their work and their colleagues in localized ways. For our project, this literally meant that we [the original YWP team] had to get out of the way and allow our four teacher leaders to take charge. This was a delicate dance, however, because while we needed to background ourselves in the K-12 work Savage was engaging in, we simultaneously maintained and ramped up the support we were giving to the development of the four teacher leaders.

Another key example of the primacy of the local comes from a project that is connected to but goes beyond the New Pathways Grant; still, we need at least to mention it in passing.

Inspired by the New Pathways Grant and the focus on Savage, in 2017 Amber applied for and received a grant from the Montana Historical Society to do archival work on Savage in Helena, Montana. The grant funded research that would lead to the publication of a book about Savage, and Amber's application provided a unique angle: She would do research on Savage, bring back copies and notes to share with the school, and in the Spring of 2018, the Savage School would publish a book - written by students across grade levels - now called "Landscapes of Savage." In addition to pieces related to the materials Amber collected over one week in Helena last summer, the publication will include materials from interviews, personal writing, field notes from places in and around Savage, art, and much more, all written and created by K-12 students in Savage. Not only will this publication be shared with community members, but it will have a place in the library of the Montana State Historical Society. This promises to be one of the most exciting outcomes of this entire process. Amber's reflection on working toward the "Landscapes of Savage" (inset 6) reflects the values and obligations of teaching from a deep sense of place, and the necessity of trusting local teachers to best understand how to do that work.

**Inset 6: Amber Henwood**

Upon our return from New Orleans in January, 2017 we finally had an outline for our project. We knew we wanted to create some sort of project that encompassed the history of Savage for our final product. As the history teacher in our small school, I felt compelled to make this not just a writing project, but a project of cultural and historical importance for the community and school we represent. We would encompass what it means to be from Savage, the pride that went into the building of the canal and the community. The important roles that agriculture, coal mining, and the irrigation project play in the small rural community that was so beautifully placed on the Yellowstone River.

I am not a native to Savage, but am a native to Eastern Montana. I understand the pride that engulfs a person from our little part of the world. The pride that a child takes in their 4H steer's blue ribbon or a parent takes at a Friday night football game. The pride of knowing that a local's great grandparents homesteaded in a house that still stands or that the bell in the front of the school came from one of the original school houses. The pride that comes with a

centennial celebration or when community veterans are walked out onto the football field for the community to celebrate on Veterans Day. The pride that beams from an old rancher in the local bar as he tells the stories of his youth. The stories make the other patrons laugh, until the stories turn to one of the old cowboy's brother that was shot down in WWII. The laughs turn to solemn, yet prideful looks of sympathy. One of the patrons pats the old man on the back and orders him another beer. The pride that comes from watching a 6-man football team fight their way to a play off game under the bright lights behind the local high school or the pride that is taken in restoring the local cemetery. The locals tell stories of those they have laid to rest there. The memories and pride flood their eyes and a tear drops onto the flowers placed on the gravestone. The pride of watching a graduating class head off to college only to have one of them come back and run the family ranch when their grandfather becomes ill. He never leaves again and can't hold back the tears in his eyes when his own children graduate and head off on the same adventure. It's all about the pride of being from a small community. That community pride can overwhelm someone not native to the area, but that pride is all they have. Most won't ever be published in the history books or remembered for great triumphs that change civilization, so they have to keep the community legacies alive within themselves.

How in the world would a simple history teacher be able to find the resources to display this sense of pride in one small school project? How could I do that old cowboy or those champion football players justice? I knew that this was going to be a task unlike any other I had taken on.

**Day of Writing.** The Day of Writing took place on Wednesday, May 17, 2017. As the four teachers planned this day, they focused on three questions: How could this day (at the end of the school year) be *fun*? How would students work together across grade levels? How would the teachers react to it? For months, Alan, Amber, Cassandra, and Tyrel prepared schedules and ordered supplies, organizing their activities around "A Writing Carnival" theme.



Given the community aspects foregrounded in Savage, and a chance to do writing differently, the leaders created an intricate schedule for small group and whole school activities (see Appendix 2). This intricate schedule also helped the leaders show their colleagues the depth of their organization. The teacher leaders organized all small groups with students across-grade levels, led by teachers and YWP team members. The day would begin with a welcome, followed by a K-11 Writing Marathon, lunch, and k-11 participation in writing-based activities throughout the afternoon. Cassandra (Inset 7) illustrates the momentum and process during planning, as well as locates both the burden of and praise for this day's events solidly on the leadership of the Savage team.



**Inset 7: Cassandra Moos**

Planning the end of the year “Spring Carnival” took a lot of extra work in the afternoons as a team. From figuring out activity stations, timing of events, pulling together K-11 groups of students that would work well with one another, assigning teachers to the groups, ordering supplies, and inviting the media to cover the event, this day took a lot of work and foresight to plan, but it was so worth it! Once the other teachers had the day explained to them and were able to see how it was going to work, we successfully addressed their few concerns. In the end, our major worry was getting the kids to be excited for this like we were.

With teacher’s comfortable with the day’s schedule, and the Savage leadership team assured they had collegial support, Amber shifted into civic engagement (befitting a history and social studies teacher): She and her students invited the Governor of Montana to come to Savage on May 17 to take part in the carnival. Though he was unable to attend, he declared May 17, 2017, the Montana Day of Writing.

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
STATE OF MONTANA

Steve Bullock  
GOVERNOR



Mike Cooney  
LT. GOVERNOR

May 4, 2017

Dear Friends:

I'm pleased to recognize May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017 as "Day of Writing" in the state of Montana. I commend the efforts of Savage Public Schools, the Yellowstone Writing Project, and the Montana State University for their collaboration to advance student preparation in writing proficiency.

As the father of a freshman, sixth, and fourth grader, no issue is more important to me than the quality of education in Montana. Writing skills are critical to how we express ourselves and communicate with one another. Writing is the premise for success in school, work, and in life.

I appreciate the hard work of the Savage Public School system providing this event for their students. This is a strong example of academic leadership by a Montana public school and demonstrates the immense talent within our eastern Montana school districts. Thoughtfully constructed events like "Day of Writing" instill confidence and a lifelong love of writing in our children. Writing exercises directly foster academic, emotional, and social development which enhance all aspects of our lives.

I encourage all Montanans to support our students, who are 'learning today and leading tomorrow', by recognizing May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017 as "Day of Writing."

Sincerely,

A blue ink signature of Steve Bullock.

STEVE BULLOCK  
Governor

STATE CAPITOL • P.O. BOX 200801 • HELENA, MONTANA 59620-0801  
TELEPHONE: 406-444-3111 • FAX: 406-444-5529 • WEBSITE: WWW.MT.GOV

As a team, we quickly harnessed this visible declaration of support and invited both of Montana's Senators; though neither could attend, Senator Jon Tester wrote his Montana story.

JON TESTER  
MONTANA

COMMITTEES:  
APPROPRIATIONS  
BANKING  
COMMERCE  
INDIAN AFFAIRS  
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

SENATE HART BUILDING  
SUITE 311  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510  
202-224-2644

INTERNET:  
[tester.senate.gov/contact](mailto:tester.senate.gov/contact)

## United States Senate

May 17, 2017

I want to thank Governor Bullock for proclaiming today as the "Day of Writing" across the state of Montana. To celebrate today and encourage Montana students to write more, I am proud to partner with the Yellowstone Writing Project to share my Montana story.

My Montana story is similar to many Montanans who live in small, Class C towns like Savage.

I was born and raised on a farm in Big Sandy, Montana. Today, there are only 700 folks who live in Big Sandy, but there is still no other place I would rather call "home." My grandparents homesteaded our land over 100 years ago, and through drought, depression, high-interest rates, and low commodity prices—we have always persevered.

After I graduated from college, I was a teacher in Big Sandy, but farming was in my blood, and in the late 1970's my wife and I took over the farm full-time. Each year I rotate the crops to keep the soil healthy, and this year, I planted wheat, kamut, safflower, and peas. Now, over the next four months, I will keep a close eye on these crops, get my combine in shape, and hope that the weather stays predictable until harvest.

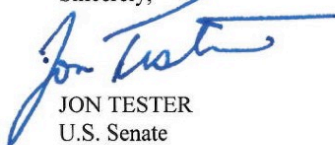
In my other job, as a U.S. Senator, I have to make tough decisions and weigh in on the biggest debates that impact our country.

It is during the long days on the tractor where I do my best thinking, and it is when I brainstorm my solutions to help our veterans, create more jobs in Montana, strengthen our schools, and improve health care. Often times, when I jump off the tractor at sunset, I have a fresh list of ideas to take back to Washington, D.C.

In fact, I honestly believe that this was exactly what our founding father had in mind when they created a representative Congress. Being a farmer is the best job I have ever had, and it helps me be a better Senator.

My Montana story is simple. I am proud to farm the same land as my parents and grandparents, I am honored to represent Montanans in the U.S. Senate, and I am excited to pass the farm down someday to the next generation of Testers.

Sincerely,



JON TESTER  
U.S. Senate

BOZEMAN  
(406) 586-4450

BUTTE  
(406) 723-3277

GLENDALE  
(406) 365-2391

GREAT FALLS  
(406) 452-9585

HELENA  
(406) 449-5401

KALISPELL  
(406) 257-3360

BILLINGS  
(406) 252-0550

MISSOULA  
(406) 728-3003

We also invited the other Writing Project Sites in Montana (the Montana Writing Project and the Elk River Writing Project) to participate in the day of writing with us or in their own sites or schools. We invited faculty and students in the English Department at Montana State University to take part in this day of writing in their own classes. For those who couldn't be with us to write, we offered a simple prompt: *Tell Us Your Montana Story*. Inspired by this collective energy and interest in hearing stories of Montanans throughout the state, we turned this prompt into a writing competition for the Big Sky Country State Fair Summer 2017, and a team from YWP served as the judging panel. In the Spring-Summer of 2017, writing energy and energy around writing was high and the tangible interest and respect for what Savage School was creating was obvious. From the "Day of Writing" organized by those four teachers came statewide engagement that lasted through the Summer of 2017.

***Writing marathon.*** The Day of Writing started with a whole school gathering in the gym. Alan welcomed everyone, asking what came to mind when he said *writer*. One of the high schoolers said, "You!"; a younger girl said that a writer had a lot of pencils. Alan then announced that, though they may not realize it, they were all writers. He had us all say, "I am a writer," and then turn to someone next to us and say, "You are a writer." Some of the high schoolers probably thought it was hokey - perhaps it was a bit - but as Richard Louth asserts in *Writing Marathons*, this statement can be a powerful reminder of the potential within all of us. Sometimes, we have to name our abilities before we realize we can use it.

That launched our Writing Marathon. The four teacher leaders previously divided the school into eight groups, each group having members K-11 (seniors had already graduated) and at least one teacher (typically, groups had 2 or 3). Each of the four leaders moved to off-campus writing spots, ready to receive groups when they arrived to write. Some students were shy about

sharing and some didn't really know what to write. Even with prompts, sometimes writing can be intimidating. But everyone wrote, or drew, and sometimes both. During the marathon, each group went to five stations: a combination of places on the school grounds and throughout the town of Savage (e.g. the school cafeteria, the shop, the town museum, the firehouse, the cemetery).

Amber oversaw groups visiting Savage's tiny and richly cluttered museum, while Hali moved throughout Savage with one of the eight groups. Both (Insets 8 and 9) highlight the positive energy manifest in the Writing Marathon.

**Inset 8: Amber Henwood**

The most encouraging moments I saw were the wonder and excitement at the museum during the writing marathon portion of our day. Students found old pieces of school work from relatives, recognized names of former students on the blackboard, pretended to be the postmaster while other students pretend to mail letters. They drew pictures of old typewriters and old flags.

They took a real sense of pride while standing in those old musty rooms. A pride that only comes from being a part of a community as wonderful as Savage. This was most encouraging, because as we move towards our history of Savage project, I got a true sense that the students will not only willingly participate, but will immerse themselves in their heritage and the history of a town that is so dear to them.

**Inset 9: Hali Kirby**

The writing marathon was a game changer for me. I finally felt a part of the whole. I learned from the kids that Savage is rich in family connections, both by blood and by relationships. The student body itself felt like one large family, as I watched high school students shepherd elementary students across the street and playfully tease the other kids in our group. The kids were kind and welcomed me in a way I had not felt welcomed by the adults. Upon reflection, I am reminded of the important role shared-writing experiences play in developing community. During the writing marathon, kids wrote and shared their writing from various locations

around the school and community: the school cafeteria, the town museum, the firehouse, and through their stories and observations I began feeling a part of the whole. Though they were tentative sharers at first, once we broke the ice, the kids looked forward to sharing their writing and hearing the inspired tales from their schoolmates and the adults in the group. Though brief, an opportunity to move from outsider to insider had been presented through the marathon. I smiled a lot that day.

Too soon for most of us, the writing portion of the marathon ended. To quote Hali, “As we wrapped up the marathon, I literally felt out of breath.” We were exhausted and invigorated as all the groups returned to the gym for the full school/district share time. Given his visible role as the 7-12 English teacher, we turn to Alan (Inset 10) to unpack the sharing.

**Inset 10: Alan Hoffmann**

I would say that, at least academically, we have a fairly shy student body. Even with classes the size of seven or nine, there are a lot of kids that don’t like to present in front of their peers. So, to have people share their writing in front of the whole school might scare some off. I have been on writing marathons with other teachers, teachers of writing, who when the call to share goes out shrink away. It is tough to share. We had allotted 20 minutes.

And then Trael came forward. He wanted to share. He grabbed the mic and said, “Pacman.” That was it. I don’t know where he wrote it or why, but he really wanted to share, literally, the written word. And it started off a chain reaction. Elementary kids shared sentences. An eighth grader shared an illustrated story. A high schooler shared how cool it was to go to the bar (one of the writing locations) on a school day. The batteries in the mic died out, but no matter. Students shouted their words for their schoolmates to hear. We heard everything from descriptions of flowers to thinking about the gender divide in the cafeteria.

Amber alerted me that we had passed our 20 minutes scheduled for sharing, but I couldn’t cut it short abruptly. I had to hear more. I loved every minute of that sharing. I would have continued it as long as I could. I know I disappointed a few students when I finally did say we had to move on to the next activity.

Tyrel’s reflection (inset 11) on the Writing Marathon and the shift he noticed also helps illustrate the power of an entire school taking the time to write in and throughout its community, doing writing differently and sharing their words.

**Inset 11: Tyrel Shannon**

I felt like the kids really didn't want to participate in this writing day because of the way they thought of writing [When the word writing is used, they think of writing papers, essays, structured writing.]. As they went from station to station I saw more and more smiling faces, more people excited to be outside and when they got to their station they would write. The kids that came to my station would ask "what do I write about" and I told them whatever they wanted to write. I gave them a couple ideas to get them started and then they would take over.

It came time for the group share and I was shocked at how many kids stood up in front of their peers and talked about what they wrote. It gave them a chance to express their feelings, as well as show off a bit and no judgement was cast. The kids clearly felt safe to express among their peers no matter the age level and it made me feel like maybe I could feel more like them and write and express things whether on paper, or computer or just talking. I was so proud of the kids to stand up, forget how "cool" they were and just write and talk about their writing.

*Writing stations.* In the afternoon, the team had organized different stations (carnival booths) for students, with 20 minutes at each spot. Though 20 minutes turned out to be too short, we could see that students were engaged. Older kids helped younger kids, often without prompting. Students shared. They learned. Teachers were excited that the day was organized and didn't create extra work for them.

A key takeaway for us was the interaction of students, across grade-levels--an aspect we will allow Nigel to explain (Inset 12).

**Inset 12: Nigel Waterton**

The day of writing at Savage Schools caught me by surprise. I knew the basic structures - stations with varied fun literacy games and activities. I had seen the descriptions of the activities - mad libs, story telling w/ made puppets, historical treasure hunts, and more... In the stuffed animal storytelling roundtable, students gathered in a group of about ten or so and reached into a bag full of plush toys. They started or contributed to a part of a collaboratively constructed narrative, based on the plush toy, each adding to the story, according to the toy they picked. What struck me was the way different ages worked together to construct a single narrative. High schoolers sat next to early primary students and middle schoolers.

The surprising thing about this was the way these students interacted with one another. There

wasn't any kind of condescension from old to young. Instead, students worked together to create a series of narratives to the immense amusement of the whole room. This uninhibited collaboration between different age groups contrasts with my expectation of a more awkward, guarded exchange. None of the older kids talked any differently to younger kids than they did to each other. They didn't shepherd younger kids' ideas or actions at all. Rather, they worked together as partners in story making.

This interaction showed me how a small school might be able to confound some of the age and grade structures our schools impose on youth. It was personally gratifying to see such delight shared between students and teachers over storytelling. The Day of Writing was one of the most profound shared spaces I have entered. That seems at least in part attributable to the positive rapport among students of different ages.

Amber also wrote about the student interactions and high-energy of the day (Inset 13).

**Inset 13: Amber Henwood**

In May, with the YWP team behind us, we held a successful, fun, and completely awesome day of writing for the students of Savage School. We mixed up grades, content, locations, and it was amazing. The school came together, students helped each other, and they wrote! They didn't even complain!

There were many moments throughout the Savage School's Day of Writing that I felt were noteworthy. High school students holding hands with elementary students, the vigorous writing at my marathon station, the excitement in the halls as groups went from one booth to the next, a student giving another student a piggy back ride in the relay, and the overall whiz of excitement that filled the school and the streets of the community were all moments that I stopped to appreciate.

*Teachers' reactions to the day of writing.* In the faculty meeting the following day—the last day of school—the response from all the teachers was positive. There were some minor adjustments to be made (e.g. more time at stations, a better organized lunch, pairing struggling students with high achieving ones) but overall, the staff were impressed that the team had pulled it off. There had been a lot of concern - and some perhaps unvoiced - about the day. But, based on the feedback they received, the Savage team was confident they had demonstrated the value



of this project, the power of writing, and the transformative value of taking writing out of the classroom..

Cassandra (Inset 14) directly addressed teachers' original concerns about students' excitement or lack thereof for the day.

**Inset 14: Cassandra Moos**

Of course the younger the student, their excitement level for anything and everything is there, but by the time they get to junior high and high school, their buy in into something all about writing, or anything that's out of their normal comfort zone is sometimes worse than pulling teeth. Many of them were very vocal about "this is going to be stupid", or "they just want us to help babysit the little kids. I don't do babysitting." We were certain that we'd have a few that conveniently get sick that day but be miraculously better for the last half day of school, but they all showed up! Some of our hard to impress teenagers were even saying simple phrases like "this wasn't as bad as I thought it was going to be." Which, in teenage language, is saying a lot!

The day itself was fast, a blur, but so much fun! I didn't get to see much as I was running an activity in my room, but the kids loved their time in there and I could feel the excitement in the hallways between groups and at the end of the day when some of them were checking out. Our random idea in New Orleans ended up being one of the coolest events these students had been a part of.

We reflect on the Day of Writing here because it emphasizes our two key values. The celebration of writing that initiated this project became a strategy of the Savage leadership team, as they shaped that value of celebrating from the perspective of the school and the community. The celebration, that is, took on a local leadership and focus. The energy generated by the Day of Writing continues to reaffirm those values. As writing and writing conversations became more visible among the leadership team and their colleagues, Superintendent Lynne Peterson made a tangible decision: Teachers would display their students' writing in the commons area regularly,

taking turns so the parents and community members gathering there for athletic events and community functions would see a writing board next to trophy cases. Soon, a community member approached Lynne and asked her if she could add paper and pencils to the board so the community could write back to the student writers and leave them a comment or compliment. Image 1 (below) shows one of the writing displays, indicating that the celebrating of writing had moved beyond the school and into the community.



Image 1. Celebrating Writing in School and with the Community

### **What We Learned: Making use of ISI Components**

As we've noted, this resource is not a road map. Instead, as a guide for our future work and to offer some ways of thinking for other sites, we'd like to reflect here on the successes and the lessons we've learned during the process.

In our pathway, we knew that we wanted to offer (albeit in a different form) the same sorts of experiences that we offer Fellows who participate in our traditional ISI: we wanted teachers to have an opportunity to write, share their writing, and grow as writers. We wanted teachers to try their hand at offering professional development, as with the teaching demonstrations. We wanted teachers to be active researchers. And while we succeeded, largely, in offering these experiences, next time we do this we will prioritize the work more carefully.

### **Leading Professional Development as Teaching Demonstrations**

Our greatest success came through engaging these teachers in professional development. In fact, by offering PIR opportunities in their own school and by taking responsibility for structuring school events and guiding other teachers through them, the teachers at Savage had a much more intense professional development experience than any teacher in our traditional ISIs has ever had. In September of 2017, the four teachers designed and led an entire PIR day, focused on the schoolwide Landscapes of Savage project, which involves all teachers in the school. While an ISI teaching demonstration takes place in front of a group of supportive teachers invested in each teacher's success, the PIR day included a range of teachers; most, thankfully, have been supportive and even enthusiastic, though, as we expect there would be in any school, there is a range of other attitudes, from apathy to disregard. Providing professional development to the teachers you work with on a daily basis - close colleagues and friends - the Savage Teacher-Consultants performed teaching demonstrations on steroids.

As a site, we spent a great deal of time scaffolding the PIR day for the teachers. In the Fall of 2016, the YWP team lead a morning PIR day session, offering, for example, some cross-grade level suggestions about incorporating writing in different ways into the curriculum. The four teacher leaders then planned and executed the Day of Writing in May, a tremendous success

that boosted their confidence. In the Summer, over a two-day retreat held near Savage, we spent a good deal of time working with them as they planned the fall PIR day, which was a deep focus on the Landscapes of Savage project,

We expect that in any school, preparing and helping on-site teachers to gain the confidence and voice to offer professional development to their own colleagues will be a similarly slow process. The teachers we recruited signed up because they were interested in their own professional development, but they were less convinced, at the beginning, about their own capacities for leadership. Getting teachers ready to play this role requires extensive modeling, feedback, and support during the planning process. It requires, in particular, regular time with the teachers, both in person and at the school and remotely, during regular meetings.

However, we also came to understand the complexities of the school-context (evident, for example, through the conflict about the elementary school program) as one of the deep benefits of this approach of leadership development. While we still remain committed to the ISI model, we watched the Savage team grapple with apathy and even resistance on the part of some (though fortunately not most) teachers in the school. At the beginning, all of us saw this as a potential obstacle to our work, but as we shifted our priorities more squarely to leadership development, we began to understand the value of those challenges. In ways a traditional ISI is unlikely to provide, these teachers did their teaching demonstrations - in the form of the in-service day - in a school culture familiar to all teachers, with varying levels of professional commitment and engagement, occasional resistant faculty, and the competing priorities that exist within any school. To succeed, the Savage teachers needed support - from the YWP team but especially from each other - to persevere in the face of frustrations. The actual in-school context

required cooperation and determination in ways that offered a new leadership development experience for our site.

### **Teachers as Writers**

At the beginning of this process, the logistics of the work - getting a YWP contingent to Savage, assembling the right on-site team, understanding what it meant to develop a school-wide approach to writing, and simply figuring out how to do our work in a different environment - at times seemed overwhelming and daunting. As a result, our efforts to begin our meetings with writing diminished.

During our summer retreat in 2017, we spent a great deal of time writing and sharing, and the Savage team, after that retreat, shared writing in person and electronically. Following a group dinner the night before the PIR day in September, the team read selections from their writing in an event that mirrored the daily Author's Chair in the ISI.

Upon reflection and even in real time, we realized the generative power of the summer retreat, and the next time we do this work, we'll have a retreat like this a year earlier, at the beginning of the process, as a way of forming a community across the two teams and developing a comfort level around writing.

### **Teachers as Researchers**

There has also been a considerable amount of research involved in this process, especially on the part of Amber Henwood, the social studies teacher who received a grant from the Montana Historical Society to spend a week in Helena working in the archives to collect material about Savage and the surrounding region. But we have had a more difficult time

sustaining research across the teams and during the process. The next time we do this, as part of the earlier retreat process, we'll do some shared readings and we'll help the on-site teachers develop particular research questions that we can return to throughout the process and report back on at the end of the experience. We'll also use those research questions to develop resources for teachers throughout our site.

### **Project Logistics**

In this section, we provide details on the routines and events used to achieve our goal of developing a team of TCs within a school district. To make visible some aspects we recommend of other writing project sites considering similar work, we explain our team meetings and provide a glance into our meeting schedule with agenda items (See Appendices 3-5). We also explain three teacher meetings/workshop day, noting the shift in leadership from YWP-led to Savage teacher led, and providing two resources (a link to a .ppt and Appendix 6).

#### **Team Meetings**

We surmounted our geographical barriers by creating three levels of team meetings: Full team online meetings, Savage teacher meetings, and face to face gatherings in various geographic locations. Though we have created a subheading for each meeting level, in practice they all worked in tandem and occurred with much calendar crossover. We provide rationale for those team meetings and have included meeting schedules with particulars of the agendas in Appendices 3-5.

**Full team online meetings.** Throughout our project, we held twelve online team meetings. We set our meetings at the beginning of each school year, noting dates and times in a shared Google calendar. A typical meeting was one hour in length. All nine team members were invited to each meeting, with six or seven of us typically in attendance. For the first three

meetings, Allison created agenda items; for the rest of the meetings, the teacher leaders co-created agenda items. We managed meeting notes in a google-drive folder. Our initial goal for these meetings was to create new collegial relationships through shared writing and dialogue. As shown in Appendix 3, we began meetings one, two, and six with writing and/or conversations on shared readings.

Looking back now, we have two key reflections for other writing project sites. First, we experienced technological issues in our first few meetings, resulting in the recognition that we needed three key features: options for people to join meetings on video streams or audio calls; an option to record our conversations; and stability in connecting us across various rural spaces and bandwidth capabilities. Software platforms *WebEx* and *Go To Meetings* were most effective. Secondly, as we got deeper into event planning, we admittedly lost sight of our writing project rituals: such as writing into the meeting (a practice that doesn't work when members attend a meeting via audio while commuting). When we repeat this work in another school, we will set 90 minute meetings and we will also open with writing, likely leaving our book studies for in-person events and/or for the teacher leadership team to engage in at their local site. We found that our inconsistency with "writing into the meeting" created space for daily stressors, tasks, and competing schedules to set the tone for several of our meetings; we will be more diligent to foreground and use writing to center our time and our values next time.

**Savage teacher leader meetings.** When the 2016-2017 school year began, the Savage team held their first team meeting (as indicated in Appendix 4). They met in a classroom after school, face-to-face, and wondered how they would achieve K-12 collaborative goals. Given the questions they had and the fact that we were meeting as a full rural team online, they did not continue these meetings in the fall. When Amber and Cassandra returned from the team retreat in

New Orleans, with the idea of holding a school-wide day of writing, the teachers recognized a need to meet frequently to plan. A school-wide academic event had not been held in Savage before, and the team felt a certain pressure to make sure that the day ran smoothly.

Appendix 4 provides a brief description of these meetings, with an attempt to show the thought processes as the teachers moved from broad brainstorming to more focused approaches to enact with their colleagues and students. The tables do not show the numerous emails the team shared with one another as they organized the Day of Writing, but it does make evident that given a focused event, these leaders were compelled to regularly gather face to face. As they did so, the internal (Savage school) momentum recalibrated our full team: these four Savage teacher leaders were visible, in charge, and foregrounded while our YWP team was backgrounded. The teachers also received overwhelmingly positive feedback from their colleagues after the Day of Writing, which gave them confidence going into the summer and making plans for the September PIR day.

Once the 2017-18 school year began, the four teacher leaders met frequently, coming together on a weekly basis. There were two main purposes for these meetings. One was to share writing and receive feedback. The focus on writing was largely positive and encouraging. While there was some hesitation on the part of some to share, eventually all four did share writing during this time--usually one or two teachers were designated to share one or two pieces of writing that they had written. The other purpose of these weekly meetings was to plan for the PIR Day, to be held on September 29. As part of their preparations, they divided the faculty into smaller teams, with each of the four leaders managing a team. They created a space for shared resources in the building so teachers had a system for sharing and using the historical documents



Amber gathered. They also wrote updates to their school's newsletter so community members knew about upcoming events and initiatives.

After the September PIR Day, the Savage team elected to meet on a monthly, rather than weekly, schedule to work on plans for the spring event: Landscapes of Savage project. They also began planning another day of writing, this one to take place right before Winter Break. The Savage team intended to host a day for community members to come into the school and give talks and interviews to gather oral histories for the Landscapes project. Unfortunately, they could not match school schedules with interviewee schedules, so rather than host an ineffective event, they elected to hold interviews across several months, with people coming in to specific classrooms or a few student teams going out into the community.

**In-person gatherings.** It was essential to the success of this project that, at times, distance was covered and people on the team were able to meet in person. We complemented the full team's online meeting schedule and the in-person Savage team meetings with critical, in-person gatherings that brought Savage teacher leaders and Bozeman YWP leaders together, regardless of how many were able to attend. These meetings (listed in Appendix 5) were often social, lower key affairs in which team members separated by distance could come together. Relationship building was the focus of these gatherings, with the exceptions of January, July and November, 2017 (all of which were task-oriented and are described in the "Intensive gatherings" section).

The Yellowstone Writing Project team made it a point to visit Savage five times. By committing to this travel, the stigma or fear of university people coming in and telling Savage teachers what to do was somewhat alleviated. It also showed how invested the Yellowstone Writing Project was in the process. Each gathering held in Savage allowed Allison, Hali, Kirk,

Nigel, and Peter time to spend time in the school and the community as a way to better understand this particular site and the people within it. If other Writing Projects look to duplicate a pathway in rural and remote areas, it is imperative that they also show the willingness to travel to the school and participate in the community, even in small ways (such as attending a basketball game).

*Intensive gatherings.* The January, July, and November gatherings are distinct from the others because they were task-oriented and all of these gatherings occurred over multiple days, moments that we consider intensive experiences.

In November 2017, Allison, Amber, Cassandra and Peter traveled to New Orleans for a New Pathways Grant retreat. This retreat was the first face-to-face gathering for our team that year and it was critical. We engaged in numerous, varied conversations during the first full day and found ourselves lost in ideas and possibilities rather than concrete plans. We shared our ideas with other writing project sites and were tasked with creating a game that might help define our pathway. Admittedly thrown for a few minutes, Cassandra and Amber soon entered their areas of expertise: Cassandra began designing and drawing what our pathway could offer across a literal K-12 building (such as Savage) and Amber wrote tasks and questions for different teachers and students. Allison and Peter took notice of a plan coming to shape and engaged in discussion about how such a school-wide event, filled with tasks, might incorporate writing project ideals and leadership opportunities for teachers.

While away from our typical schedules, our small group focused. We took a few breaks and soaked in New Orleans, sharing conversations over meals and along Canal Street. We celebrated the place we were in and in so doing, reaffirmed that the local place of Savage also needed to be celebrated for this project to work.

In July 2017, Alan, Allison, Amber, Cassandra, Hali, Kirk, and Tyrel retreated to a conference center and historical site in North Dakota: The Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center. Our main goal was to remove ourselves from daily responsibilities so we could still our minds and write. For two days, we wrote together, shared our writing, debriefed collaborative events from the school year, and started planning the first professional development day that the four teacher leaders would run in September. We also recognized that we were in a special place, so we did a small Writing Marathon amidst a historical tour. Our agenda for these two days was both simple and rich:

- Write & Share Writing
- Discuss the Day of Writing as it Pertains to Upcoming School Events
- Plan the September Professional Development Day
  - (Amber shares the historical documents she gathered)
- Experience the locality of the Confluence

In terms of developing relationships as a team, this July retreat was the most significant event in our pathway. As Hali explained, “To write is to know, and until I wrote with them I did not know their stories: How they came to live and work in Savage, how their families shape their lives, or the anxieties they feel in their new roles.” When we do this work with a new group of teachers, we will have at least two writing retreats: one, as an initial event to help us get to know one another and establish norms and two, to recenter ourselves on writing and connecting, as a gift to ourselves amidst a busy project.

In November 2017, Alan, Allison, Amber, Cassandra, Hali, Kirk, and Nigel attended and presented at the National Writing Project’s Annual Meeting in St. Louis, MO. During the annual meeting we celebrated our accomplishments and honored our team, both socially and during our presentation. We also spent half a day writing together, sharing some Author’s Chair and

revising both this manuscript and the upcoming school-wide plans for the May 2018 event in Savage. Cassandra and Alan also presented our work on a rural panel at NCTE, putting our efforts in conversation with other initiatives.

All three intensives removed team members from “home” geographic locations. In so doing, the new places allowed us to focus on exploring: both the new place and the relational aspects of our team. We had time to work and time to be still. For a group of people working on a pathway that center’s a school’s location, we also found power from gathering in an unfamiliar place to focus on one another and who our developing leaders.

### **Teacher Meetings/Workshop Days**

We had three K-12 teacher meetings/workshops during our collaboration with Savage. The first was one hour long and the second two were professional inservice days. Team members from YWP and Savage were at all meetings and those leading the meetings shifted over time: Meetings 1 and 2 were led by YWP members and our third meeting was led by the Savage team.

**Celebration of writing meeting: 5/12/16.** Our first K-12 teacher meeting was YWP-led and we had two simple goals: Provide opportunity for all of us to write together and to celebrate the writing occurring at Savage Schools. Our earlier section (“Celebration of Writing” workshop) unpacked these details; here, in this resource section, we give a link to the initial .ppt used: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1kNPU5NOlrVZqFaNyeoclqM0-HHu8PYSe>. We think that other sites may find value from seeing how we used a small sampling of writing to showcase rich and varied writing across grade levels.

**Professional inservice day: 9/30/16.** YWP-led this workshop day and had two agenda items: (1) Write and share writing and (2) Dialogue both as a K-12 faculty and in smaller subsets (e.g. elementary, secondary, administration). Given that we opened the day with writing (as we

did during our first meeting the previous spring), teachers were not as startled and everyone wrote. We asked teachers to share their writing first in small groups and then had several read their pieces to the whole room. Harnessing this participation, we moved into three groups: Peter with the elementary teachers, Nigel with the secondary teachers, and Allison and Kirk with the superintendent and principal. We talked in these groups for hours, allowing people to share their experiences with writing and talk about their students as writers. Peter's group talked a lot about feeling overwhelmed with all they are expected to teach and Nigel's group was interested in creating cross-curricular, cross-grade level projects. After lunch, Peter gave a teaching demonstration, offering particular emphasis on how he uses writing to integrate various standards and engage his students.

**Professional inservice day: 9/29/17.** This final workshop day was led by the Savage team of teachers. The agenda for the day (Appendix 6) provides a high level of detail that helps indicate the amount of planning taken as well as the expectations from colleagues for visible organization. Amber's writing speaks well to the tone of the day: "We did steer each activity and move through the agenda, but it was not in a managerial sort of way; rather, colleagues shared resources with each other. Teachers were fascinated by our research and were coming up with ideas for their own projects and contributions."

### **Conclusion**

Our New Pathways work is people-centered rather than curriculum-centered. Together with supportive administration and a local leadership team, we carved out time for teachers to have professional dialogue with one another about and with writing. We celebrated writers and wrote together. We withheld judgement, gained deeper understandings of teacher perspectives in a school remote from our YWP hub and own teaching assignments, and allowed the needs of the

local team to guide our interactions. As we supported our Savage team, they created school-wide events, making writing and academic partnerships more visible to their community.

As we continue to reflect on our collaboration (and continue supporting the Savage team as they, their colleagues, and students continue writing their “Landscapes of Savage” book), we consider several questions critical, particularly as we think about starting a new partnership with another school:

- What can writing projects, such as the Yellowstone Writing Project, afford an entire school?
- How visible should a writing project site, such as the Yellowstone Writing Project, be within the larger school when partnering with teams of teachers in that school/district?
- How do we work with teachers who are not articulating a connection or desire to work with us?
- How can schools, particularly in rural and remote areas, engage with the community to connect it to curricular offerings and events?

With the help of our Savage team, as well as their Superintendent Lynne Peterson, we have begun to see ourselves as a resource hub rather than a purveyor of professional development. This is not to suggest that we are not poised and available to offer professional development across the state; rather, we are more than this. Within our growing YWP network, we know how to engage in professional conversation and collaboration across grade levels, disciplines, teaching styles, personalities, and writing philosophies. We center writing, with its relational and generative capacities, and allow our honoring of students and teachers to permeate our work. In so doing, we are reaching out to and being approached by various partners in our community and beyond as a hub that can connect teachers and students with rich experiences with text. Not only have we created new TCs through a new model of leadership development, but we have grown our own sense of what our site work and mission should be.

We also hear Lynne’s reminders as we think ahead to new projects: “Patience is essential. Educators tend to want to close out projects at the end of the year but this is not the case with YWP. Also, administrators must be on board—this can be shown by offering the collaboration as renewal credits, professional development, or even for college credit.” Lynne’s support and willingness to slow our process down so her teachers had footing underneath them was vital to our work and allowed us to breathe deeply when we realized divergent perspectives. Our new pathway to leadership was and is occurring because we entered a school in which an administrator believed in her faculty and her students. In her final reflection on this work, Superintendent Lynne Peterson (inset 15) taps into key moments of growth this new pathway has afforded her team of teacher leaders as well as her K-12 faculty and students.

**Inset 15: Superintendent Lynne Peterson**

The collaboration has opened lines of communication between grade levels. It has benefited the district by combining different grade levels in group projects. Older students are discovering how much the elementary students look up to them. They were unaware that their behavior was being observed and the term “role model” is significant. The collaboration has created awareness in the community about our students’ curiosity about Savage and its history. Another valuable aspect is that it has decreased the isolation of classroom teachers and increased professional conversations. I feel that this project has given my teachers the empowerment to better themselves in the classroom. I constantly tell my teachers that they are the professionals and experts in their content area and my job is to let them spread their wings and fly.

Our multi-year process of developing a new pathway to leadership afforded our teacher leaders thinking moments, collaboration, writing opportunities, and ways to differently experience collaboration and professionalism in their school district. As we consider where we

will forge our next partnership and school district connections, we understand that our site takeaway is additional TCs and connections in a new region of the state, while the takeaway for the team of teacher leaders will be whatever it is and becomes. The focus of working in a school, developing a team of teacher leaders, is not about changing the school culture; rather, our work is about developing leaders who can be supportive and collaborative with each other inside the school so that they can partner with YWP into the future, regardless of where their teaching careers take them. As the Yellowstone Writing Project, we will maintain our focus on teachers' development and support them in staying focused on their locality; in so doing, we will be able to view success as it develops for them.



## References

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**Appendix 1**  
**Project Timeline**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event/Activity</b>
May 2015	FB inquiry about purchasing an established writing curriculum for the Savage School district  Connection between Savage School & YWP forged
June 2015	BBQ Social with Savage School teachers & YWP
March 2016	YWP won the NWP/Gates Foundation Stage 1: New Pathways to Leadership Grant
May 12, 2016	YWP-led <i>Celebration of Writing</i> meeting in Savage with K-12 faculty
June 14, 2016 & June 28, 2016	Online YWPRT team meetings: Creating a team & establishing writing norms
Sept 22, 2016	Online YWPRT team meeting: Prepping for the professional inservice day on 9/30/16
Sept. 30, 2016	YWP-led professional development day in Savage with K-12 faculty
Oct-Dec 2016	Online YWPRT team meetings
Nov 2016	YWPRT team members attend & present at NWP's National Conference in St. Louis <a href="https://drive.google.com/open?id=1kNPU5NOIrVZqFaNyeoclqM0-HHu8PYSe">https://drive.google.com/open?id=1kNPU5NOIrVZqFaNyeoclqM0-HHu8PYSe</a>
Jan 2017	YWP won the NWP/Gates Foundation Stage 2: New Pathways to Leadership Grant
Jan 19-22, 2017	New Pathways to Leadership retreat in New Orleans
Feb-May 2017	Online YWPRT team meetings

May 17, 2017	MT Day of Writing: Savage Writing Carnival!  K-11 Writing Marathon K-11 writing games
June 2017	Savage Teacher Leadership Meeting
July-Oct 2017	Teacher leadership team meetings
July 2017	YWPRT Writing Retreat in North Dakota
August 2017	Teacher leadership team presented the year-long project ( <i>Landscapes of Savage</i> ) at a K-12 faculty meeting
August-Nov 2017	Online YWPRT team meetings
September 29, 2017	Teacher leadership team led professional inservice day with K-12 faculty
Oct 2017-April 2018	Teacher leaders continue K-12 teacher collaboration (in teams) toward the <i>Landscapes of Savage</i> project
Nov 2017	YWPRT team members attend, present, and write together at NWP's National Conference in St. Louis
May 2018	2 <sup>nd</sup> Annual, MT Day of Writing & <i>Landscapes of Savage</i> unveiled

## **Appendix 2**

### **Day of Writing Schedule**

#### **2017 Writing Carnival**

##### **Schedule of Events**

8:10-8:30 Attendance and Brings Students to Gym  
Organize Groups, Alan's Introduction

8:30 Writing Marathon Start (5 writing stations, 15 minutes per team including travel time)

8:45 First write

10:00 Come back to gym for sharing

10:20 Sharing Ends, Alan explains day's events/schedule, lunch schedule, tickets and prizes, expectations, time for questions (Remind dishwashers to leave and return as needed)

10:30-10:50 Carnival (Workshop 1)

Lunch: 10:50-11:30 (Split into 3 intervals)

10:50 Groups 1, 3, 5 go to lunch

11:00 Groups 2, 4, 6 go to lunch

11:10 Groups 7, 8 go to lunch

Students Meet on field after lunch for recess

11:30-12:00 Relays (5 minutes after to get to first afternoon workshop)

12:05-2:45 Carnival (20 minutes workshop intervals, 8 workshops)

2:45-3:00 Prizes

3:00-3:20 K-6 return to classes for Time Capsule/Letters or Pictures to future self  
High School helps tear down, returns to assigned teacher time permitting

##### **High School Assigned Teachers for End of Day**

Mr. S: 7th Grade

Ms. Moos: 8th Grade

Ms. B: 9th Grade

Miss Henwood: 10th Grade

Mr. Hoffmann: 11th Grade

**Booth Activities:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Improv: Ms. B                           | 6. Art Activity: Ms. Moos              |
| 2. Story in a Bag: Mrs. E                  | 7. Create a Game: Mr. Hoffmann         |
| 3. Journey Science Activity: Ms. H         | 8. Puppet Creations: Practicum Student |
| 4. CSI History Investigation: Miss Henwood | 9. Popcorn Recipes: Practicum Student  |
| 5. Mad Libs: Mr. Hoffmann                  | 10. Math Relays: Mr. S                 |

**Writing Marathon Stations:** On Campus stations will receive prompts/Off Campus will have an attendant  
On Campus:

- |               |                   |              |         |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------|---------|
| 1. Playground | 2. Football Field | 3. Cafeteria | 4. Shop |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------|---------|

Off Campus

- |                     |                               |                    |  |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| 1. Museum (Henwood) | 2. Front of the Bar (Shannon) | 3. Firehall (Moos) | 4. Basketball Court by Bus Barn (Hoffmann) |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|--|

**Workshop Rotations** (You will have 15 minutes to get to your first station. Each 15 minutes after that includes travel time.)

**8:45-9:00**

On Campus

- |                        |                            |                       |                  |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1. Playground: Group 1 | 2. Football Field: Group 2 | 3. Cafeteria: Group 3 | 4. Shop: Group 4 |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|

Off Campus

- |                    |                          |                      |                      |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Museum: Group 5 | 2. Front of Bar: Group 6 | 3. Firehall: Group 7 | 4. BB Court: Group 8 |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|

**9:00-9:15**

On Campus

- |                        |                            |                       |                  |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1. Playground: Group 8 | 2. Football Field: Group 1 | 3. Cafeteria: Group 2 | 4. Shop: Group 3 |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|

Off Campus

- |                    |                          |                      |                      |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Museum: Group 4 | 2. Front of Bar: Group 5 | 3. Firehall: Group 6 | 4. BB Court: Group 7 |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|

**9:15-9:30**

On Campus

- |                        |                            |                       |                  |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1. Playground: Group 7 | 2. Football Field: Group 8 | 3. Cafeteria: Group 1 | 4. Shop: Group 2 |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|

Off Campus

- |                    |                          |                      |                      |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Museum: Group 3 | 2. Front of Bar: Group 4 | 3. Firehall: Group 5 | 4. BB Court: Group 6 |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|

**9:30-9:45**

On Campus

- |                        |                            |                       |                  |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 2. Playground: Group 6 | 2. Football Field: Group 7 | 3. Cafeteria: Group 8 | 4. Shop: Group 1 |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|

Off Campus

- |                    |                          |                      |                      |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 2. Museum: Group 2 | 2. Front of Bar: Group 3 | 3. Firehall: Group 4 | 4. BB Court: Group 5 |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|

**9:45-10:00**

On Campus

- |                        |                            |                       |                  |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 3. Playground: Group 5 | 2. Football Field: Group 6 | 3. Cafeteria: Group 7 | 4. Shop: Group 8 |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|

Off Campus

- |                    |                          |                      |                      |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 4. Museum: Group 1 | 2. Front of Bar: Group 2 | 3. Firehall: Group 3 | 4. BB Court: Group 5 |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|

## Activity Booth Rotations

10:30-10:50

1. Improv: Group 1
2. Story in a Bag: Group 2
3. Journey Science Activity: Group 3
4. CSI History Investigation: Group 4
5. Mad Libs: Group 5
6. Art Activity: Group 6
7. Create a Game: Group 7
8. Puppet Creations: Group 8
9. Popcorn Recipes: BYE

12:05-12:25

1. Improv: BYE
2. Story in a Bag: Group 1
3. Journey Science Activity: Group 2
4. CSI History Investigation: Group 3
5. Mad Libs: Group 4
6. Art Activity: Group 5
7. Create a Game: Group 6
8. Puppet Creations: Group 7
9. Popcorn Recipes: Group 8

12:25-12:45

1. Improv: Group 8
2. Story in a Bag: BYE
3. Journey Science Activity: Group 1
4. CSI History Investigation: Group 2
5. Mad Libs: Group 3
6. Art Activity: Group 4
7. Create a Game: Group 5
8. Puppet Creations: Group 6
9. Popcorn Recipes: Group 7

12:45-1:05

1. Improv: Group 7
2. Story in a Bag: Group 8
3. Journey Science Activity: BYE
4. CSI History Investigation: Group 1
5. Mad Libs: Group 2
6. Art Activity: Group 3
7. Create a Game: Group 4
8. Puppet Creations Group 5
9. Popcorn Recipes: Group 6

1:05-1:25

1. Improv: Group 6
2. Story in a Bag: Group 7
3. Journey Science Activity: Group 8
4. CSI History Activity: BYE
5. Mad Libs: Group 1
6. Art Activity: Group 2
7. Create a Game: Group 3
8. Puppet Creations: Group 4
9. Popcorn Recipes: Group 5

1:25-1:45

1. Improv: Group 5
2. Story in a Bag: Group 6
3. Journey Science Activity: Group 7
4. CSI History Activity: Group 8
5. Mad Libs: BYE
6. Art Activity: Group 1
7. Create a Game: Group 2
8. Puppet Creations: Group 3
9. Popcorn Recipes: Group 4

1:45-2:05

1. Improv: Group 4
2. Story in a Bag: Group 5
3. Journey Science Activity: Group 6
4. CSI History Activity: Group 7
5. Mad Libs: Group 8
6. Art Activity: BYE
7. Create a Game: Group 1
8. Puppet Creations: Group 2
9. Popcorn Recipes: Group 3

2:05-2:25

1. Improv: Group 3
2. Story in a Bag: Group 4
3. Journey Science Activity: Group 5
4. CSI History Activity: Group 6
5. Mad Libs: Group 7
6. Art Activity: Group 8
7. Create a Game: BYE
8. Puppet Creations: Group 1
9. Popcorn Recipes: Group 2

2:25-2:45

1. Improv: Group 2
2. Story in a Bag: Group 3
3. Journey Science Activity: Group 4
4. CSI History Activity: Group 5
5. Mad Libs: Group 6
6. Art Activity: Group 7
7. Create a Game: Group 8
8. Puppet Creations: BYE
9. Popcorn Recipes: Group 1

See Group Rosters to verify attendance.

### Appendix 3

#### Online Team Meeting Agendas

Meeting # and Date	Agenda Items	Lingering Questions/Ideas
#1 6/14/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introductions</li> <li>● Writing Prompt: What experiences do you want your students to have as writers?</li> <li>● Back to the Future Conversation: 5 years from now, what would you like to see the students/teachers in Savage accomplish/be doing?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How can we embrace K-12 all in the same building to find new ways to talk with and work together (both as colleagues and as student writers)?</li> <li>● How can we create conversations and opportunities for all teachers to be involved if they so choose?</li> </ul>
#2 6/28/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Writing prompt &amp; conversation about Stephen King's book <i>On Writing</i></li> <li>● What might we change/focus on in our classrooms?</li> <li>● How might we begin to talk about writing differently at Savage School?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What does writing do for us that is not about the teaching of writing?</li> <li>○ And when do students get to write without being evaluated on it?</li> </ul> </li> <li>● How can the teacher leadership team open conversations with colleagues and how can YWP support this remotely?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Can we create a massive cross-curricular project across grade levels?</li> <li>● How do we build on the faculty community already established and begin working together on and with writing/curriculum/students?</li> </ul>
#3 9/22/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● School is back in session: What is happening?</li> <li>● Planning for the K-12 professional inservice day               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Examine K-12 writing (continue the celebration and share what kinds of</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How do we build on the upcoming inservice day?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What do teachers need and want to feel supported?</li> <li>○ Are there times when the school</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



	<p>writing teachers are doing and plan to do with students this year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Writing &amp; Evaluation: How can teachers communicate writing progress/struggles with students and families in new ways?</li> <li>○ Peter's teaching demo [scheduled for the upcoming professional development day]: How to navigate competing stressors, using writing to bring literacy aspects together</li> </ul>	<p>calendar/teacher meeting schedules make space for collegial conversations and planning?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Secondary teachers are interested in talking about a cross-curricular project. How is the elementary experiencing this? And how can we get an elementary rep on the team?</li> </ul>
#4 12/2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Update on school programs and professional development plans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ New program options for the elementary literacy curriculum</li> <li>○ How can teachers communicate about cross-curricular ideas over time (is there an online platform for this?)</li> <li>○ What are some professional development needs teachers are discussing/wanting?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How can we reach out to the Savage community and beyond?</li> <li>● Are there leadership development opportunities in Northeastern MT? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What might we create that fits what teachers want/need?</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Perhaps we should offer a book study to interested K-12 teachers.</li> </ul>
#5 1/26/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Update full team about ideas from New Orleans: writing day at the end of the school year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Can we pull off an all-school day of writing the day before the last day of school?</li> </ul>
#6 2/23/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Writing prompt &amp; conversation about Christine Dawson's <i>The Teacher-Writer</i></li> <li>● Updates on curricular conversations and professional development needs from Savage teachers</li> <li>● Upcoming events in Savage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We need to move into concrete dates and tasks so teacher leaders and teachers can work together toward the Day of Writing in May.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● MT Historical Society grant (Amber is submitting a proposal)</li> <li>● How can we think about using historical society documents alongside local narratives and local museum artifacts?</li> </ul>	
#7 3/23/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Updates on the Day of Writing in May (aka, May school event: Writing Carnival) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teachers have a lot of questions about what the day will include and how they will participate.</li> <li>○ Grade level teachers are talking about how the activities will fit their student writers</li> <li>○ What are you worried about?</li> <li>○ What makes you hesitate?</li> <li>○ What do you hope for?</li> <li>○ What would be memorable?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● K-12 collegial conversations are challenging (37 ½ days of school left with many interruptions &amp; various standards to consider for a K-12 experience)</li> <li>● The teacher leadership team is meeting tomorrow to make a plan for how to talk with their colleagues about concerns and then address said concerns: This must happen on the local level</li> </ul>
#8 4/20/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Spring writing day event planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Review schedule &amp; discuss roles across the team</li> <li>○ Order materials for the day (journals, prizes, popcorn, decorations, etc.)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Savage teacher leaders will create the full materials list and connect with Allison on ordering</li> </ul>
#9 5/2/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Final discussions about upcoming Day of Writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We are as ready as we can be!</li> </ul>
#10 8/24/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● School is back in session: What is happening? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How can we use the positive experiences from the Day of Writing in May and shift into plans for the Sept inservice day and this year's school-wide</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Our four teacher leaders are collaborating with their teams of teachers on the following topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Local agriculture</li> <li>○ Local canal</li> <li>○ Savage school/community</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>initiative?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How are group conversations going?</li> <li>● Update on teacher leaders writing group meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Big events</li> <li>● Note the press from the Day of Writing:  <a href="http://www.roundupweb.com/story/2017/05/24/news/savage-public-school-holds-day-of-writing/9629.html">http://www.roundupweb.com/story/2017/05/24/news/savage-public-school-holds-day-of-writing/9629.html</a></li> </ul>
#11 9/6/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Preparations for the inservice day 9/29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ We are mindful that we want to engage teachers in the work and the day's activities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Station review</li> <li>■ Resource review</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We hope to model how writing helps us create community and immerse ourselves in Savage as a landscape being studied.</li> </ul>
#12 9/21/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Preparations for the inservice day 9/29</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How can teachers stay connected with their teams throughout the school year in generative and not micromanaging ways?</li> </ul>

## Appendix 4

### Savage Teacher Leader Team Meeting Agendas

Gathering Date	Brief Description
8/12/16	Teacher leaders focused discussion on big questions: How do we accomplish our goal of a collaborative teacher effort? How are our teachers thinking about and using writing in their classrooms? Do we need to develop an assessment tool or map?
1/25/17	Amber & Cassandra presented ideas from New Orleans The team discussed an all-school day of writing (in May).
2/20/17	Teacher leaders prepared and sent a survey, asking for faculty opinions on an all-school day of writing (in May).
3/8/17	Amber updated the team on her submitted grant application through the Montana Historical Society.
4/11/17	Teacher leaders met at The Meadowlark to discuss results of their survey. They also made concrete plans for the Day of Writing: carnival theme and events/booths for the afternoon stations.
5/3/17	The four leaders met to finalize teacher/student groups and stations for the all-school day of writing (5/17).
5/8/17	Teacher leaders handed out packets and group assignments to their colleagues at a school-staff meeting. They also explained the full schedule and answered questions.
6/22/17	Teacher leaders checked in with writing that each was drafting as well as upcoming tasks (looking ahead to the next school year).  They discussed reservation details for July's writing retreat at The Confluence (in ND) and Amber updated the team on what she gathered from the MT History Museum in Helena.
8/23/17	Tyrel shared writing. Teacher leaders discussed how to best balance their time: sharing of writing (Author's Chair) and PIR Day Planning (for 9/29).
8/30/17	Amber and Alan shared writing. Teacher leaders discussed how to explain the <i>Landscapes of Savage</i> to their colleagues.

9/6/17	Cassandra shared writing. Teacher leaders planned for the 9/29 PIR day.
9/20/17	Alan shared writing. Teacher leaders planned for the 9/29 PIR day.
9/27/17	Teacher leaders planned for the 9/29 PIR day and drafted an e-mail to their colleagues (with the PIR day schedule).
11/6/17	Teacher leaders drafted initial plans for a December Day of Writing. Teacher leaders wrote a list of community members to be interviewed for the <i>Landscapes of Savage</i> project and brainstormed how to raise awareness of the project outside of school?
11/29/17	Teacher leaders continued talking about a December Day of Writing and interviews.
12/6/2017	Teacher leaders reviewed schedules and responses from community members and decided that due to scheduling conflicts, they would not host a December Day of Writing. Tyrel shared that he held interviews in his classroom [which sparked another teacher to do them in her classroom as well]; teacher leaders celebrated this “ripple effect” and recognized that their colleagues were noticing their work.

## Appendix 5

### Team Gatherings

Gathering Date	Brief Description
June 2015	Savage School teachers, YWP directors, & YWP TCs had a BBQ social to connect, talk about Savage, school writing, and teachers' goals.
May 2016	4 team members had a dinner social to connect and learn more about Savage, the community.
September 2016	8 team members had a dinner social to connect and discuss the teacher inservice day, which YWP facilitated on 9/30.
January 2017	4 team members retreated to New Orleans for four days to plan, connect, and work with other New Pathways to Leadership Grant teams.
February 2017	2 team members met at a Savage basketball game and for coffee in Bozeman when 1 teacher leader traveled to the girls' basketball tournaments.
April 2017	3 Bozeman-local team members met for breakfast with one teacher leader and his the two administrators [who were all in Bozeman to give a presentation] to talk socially and gauge the levels of interest and concern in Savage.
May 2017	8 team members had a dinner social to connect and celebrate the successful planning for the MT Day of Writing happening the next day (5/17).
July 2017	7 team members retreated to a conference center and historical site in North Dakota for two days to write together, debrief the school year, connect, and plan the professional development and events for AY 2017-2018.
September 2017	8 team members had a dinner social to share writing through author's chair and to discuss concerns about the next day's (9/29) teacher inservice.
November 2017	7 team members attended and presented at the National Writing Project's Annual Meeting in St. Louis, MO. 2 teacher leaders also presented our work on a rural panel at NCTE.

## Appendix 6

### PIR Day Agenda

SEPTEMBER 29<sup>TH</sup> 2017

8:30 AM- JOURNAL/WRITING UTENSILS

15min—What’s your “Savage Story” writing prompt

15min—Sharing “Savage Story”

9:00 - Amber explains historical resources, teachers have notecards and write down what information they are interested in/think would fit in their curriculum.

9:15 - Writing Group Examples of Classroom Activities

9:30 - Get in groups and discuss plans. Start work on plan.

10:15 Break

10:30- Photo Analysis (4 Groups)

10min -- YWP of photo analysis explanation

10 min -- In group to observe/write (1big picture)

10 min – Sharing

11:00 - Morning Q&A

11:30- LUNCH [provided by the school]

12:15- Writing Marathon

Go to 2 different spots, write and share @ spots.

1:15- Reflection on Marathon

1:30- Project Logistics

Deadlines, small groups get binders and look through and create work plan draft.

- Projects and Writings need to be done and submitted to teacher leaders by **March 9th**