

# *Keeping and Creating American Communities*

*Proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities  
by the  
Kennesaw Mountain Writing Project,  
a National Writing Project Site,  
in collaboration with  
partner NWP sites, local humanities organizations,  
and public schools in northwest Georgia*

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## *Keeping and Creating American Communities*

This interdisciplinary collaborative brings together secondary schoolteachers with scholars and community leaders to develop a national model for "Keeping and Creating American Communities" through humanities education. Drawing upon recent scholarship in American Studies and literacy/composition studies, we will generate a writing-centered framework for studying how local cultures—in diverse locations and historical moments—construct themselves as "Americans" through literary texts, language, architecture, cultural events, public policies and the physical landscape. To make teachers and students critical stewards of their own dynamic communities, we will develop regional applications of transportable national themes and circulate our work via interrelated dissemination modes (performances, publications of student work, exhibits and a project website). We will export those resources to other regions through pilot teachers' adaptations of our themes in their own communities. Using technologies collaboratively, we will evaluate our progress cross-regionally, then refine our model for further dissemination to diverse national audiences through the National Writing Project network.

Taking northwest Georgia as our initial focus for study, we will construct an expanding web of materials, questions and concepts for studying situated cultures *along with* students to achieve a productive view of the diverse legacies and emerging communities that may represent themselves as "American" in the twenty-first century. Extending that web to pilot teachers in Michigan, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and California, we will refine a framework for learning that is both locally enacted and nationally interchanged.

Across all project sites, our study of situated cultures will be guided by five thematic components: 1) Reclaiming Displaced Heritages; 2) Educating for Citizenship; 3) Cultivating Homelands; 4) Building Cities; and 5) Shifting Landscapes, Converging Peoples. In Georgia, our exploration of these themes will begin via the following local applications: 1) Re-examining the Cherokee Removal; 2) Uplifting a "New" South; 3) Farming Georgia in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century; 4) Re-imagining Atlanta as a Cultured, Corporate Center; and 5) Reconfiguring 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Suburbias. Through these regionally specific efforts at "Keeping and Creating American Communities," we will generate exemplary resources for our partners/pilot teachers at other National Writing Project sites to employ comparatively while examining other particular communities in their local contexts.

Throughout the program, our National Advisory Board will provide collegial evaluation complementing the classroom-oriented input from our pilot teachers. To remain fully engaged partners in the project, board members will join conversations on the project listserv and provide formative critique of the program's website. Visiting the project's Georgia start-up center to facilitate at least one study session for teacher-participants, each board member will contribute unique expertise to the emerging framework while achieving a "site-based" knowledge of the project's work that can inform evaluative sessions at our annual meetings.

At the heart of the collaborative will be two multi-week summer institutes (in 2000 and 2001) bringing together leading humanities scholars from numerous disciplines with twenty-five outstanding teachers already selected through a competitive process. In summer 2000, after whole-group study introducing the various program components, the participating teachers will move into small-group teams to explore one topic in depth and to develop new humanities resources for study of that theme. During the academic year, during field-testing, the group will carry out teacher research to evaluate our work while disseminating the model to other educators in our region and around the country. In the second summer, participants will reunite to revisit our core content, including an array of texts developed with students during the school year. Participants will also generate new variations on our themes (e.g., adding "Recovering the History of Brer Rabbit" to our Reclaiming Displaced Heritages" component). A small group of secondary students, chosen competitively based on application and writing samples, will join a few days of the institute to pilot test approaches for "creating" additional humanities resources through our major dissemination modes: print publications, performances, exhibits, and our

website. School year 2001-2002 will combine follow-up and evaluation in all project classrooms with multi-faceted dissemination of the program's content in a wide range of venues.

## Narrative Description of the Project

### 1. Rationale

The central intellectual goal for this project is to examine and reaffirm the dynamic relationship between formations of local community and shifting visions of American nationhood. This interdisciplinary collaborative brings together secondary schoolteachers with scholars and community leaders to develop a national model for "Keeping and Creating American Communities" through humanities education. Drawing upon recent scholarship in American Studies and literacy/composition studies, we will generate a writing-centered framework for studying how local cultures—in diverse locations and historical moments—construct themselves as "Americans" through literary texts, language, architecture, cultural events, public policies and the physical landscape. Guided by a National Advisory Board made up primarily of distinguished American Studies scholars, and supported by pilot teachers in California, Oklahoma, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, we will collaboratively refine this model.

To make teachers and students critical stewards of their own dynamic communities, we will develop regional applications of transportable national themes and circulate our work via interrelated dissemination modes (performances, publications of student work, exhibits and a project website). We will export those resources to other regions through our pilot teachers' adaptations of these themes in their own communities. Using multiple technologies, we will evaluate our progress cross-regionally, then disseminate to diverse national audiences, in part through the National Writing Project's professional development network for teachers.

Calls for humanities teachers to honor the various forms of diversity increasingly obvious in United States classrooms have elicited a range of responses, including questions about the place of "nationhood" itself as an organizing principle in school/university curricula, especially in an era of heightened internationalism and border-crossing. In her 1998 presidential address to the American Studies Association (ASA), Janice Radway even raised the possibility of re-naming that organization "Inter-American," partly to distance its methodologies and assumptions from too-easy conflation of "United States" and "America," but also to acknowledge the increasingly

global “intricate interdependencies” that belie a “container” or bounded model of (national) identity (10-15). At the same time, some scholars and members of the general public are expressing what might be viewed as a counter-position—pleas to reinvigorate the study of unique, clearly defined local and regional cultures. Through scholarship based in comparative cultural analysis, however, we can see that these two trends are not as contradictory as they might at first appear, and we can also discern the outlines of a generative framework for proactive study of diverse American communities as they have sought to express a national identity. Indeed, Radway herself has called for viewing “the local and the global” as “intricately intertwined,” and therefore has advocated “fostering . . . a relational and comparative perspective” (24). Already in the early 1990s, in fact, Michael Kammen was arguing that “looking at subnational units of social organization might actually help us to get a better handle on the problem of American exceptionalism” (3). He saw productive possibilities for “comparative ‘local history,’” suggesting that such study could move scholarship and teaching beyond historicizing versions of exceptionalism toward understanding how varying meanings have been attached, in different contexts, “to be[ing] an American” (32-33).

By integrating these developments in American Studies with related work in literacy/composition studies, this project will invite teachers and students to consider how diverse versions of American national identity have been *composed* in particular locations and historical moments, and how, by analyzing those processes and “creating” re-formulations of them, new visions of community are formed. In other words, by acknowledging the power of imagined communities of nationhood, the project will build on work by historians of culture like Benedict Anderson (*Imagined Communities*). Meanwhile, in seeking to analyze the often-competing ideologies evident in versions of nationhood within the United States, we will call upon such social-epistemic scholars of rhetoric as James Berlin to promote students’ critical awareness of their own potential role as *creators* of new American communities in a new century.

We realize that Americans often have competing ideas about what values and traditions should be maintained in national culture, as well as varying degrees of access to the tools needed

to circulate their visions. To highlight such differences while acknowledging the common impulse to envision a singular national culture, we have developed a set of themes for studying key moments in *regional* history when the meaning and attainment of *national* identity have been contested in an array of humanities texts. Our themes for study were originally identified by local university scholars' and area schoolteachers' thinking together about Georgians' varying experiences constructing themselves as distinctively "American." But our commitment to examining issues of national significance has already led us to seek input from "pilot" teachers around the country, who assure us these themes are broadly relevant.

***Reclaiming Displaced Heritages***  
***Educating for Citizenship***  
***Cultivating Homelands***  
***Building Cities***  
***Shifting Landscapes, Converging Peoples.***

On one level this project will carry out sustained, collaborative study of local constructions of imagined nationhood as they have been carried out at particular historical moments in *one* region. However, another key component of *Keeping and Creating American Communities* will be to enable teachers and students in other regions to produce their own comparative examinations of these themes. So, for instance, while our initial examination of the "Reclaiming Displaced Heritages" theme in Georgia will focus on the Cherokee Indian removal in the early nineteenth century, we can envision how students led by our California pilot teacher can explore parallel texts about the displacement of Californios (e.g., the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, newspaper accounts of capitalist development in the territory, literary texts such as Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton's *The Squatter and the Don*). Similarly, while our local "Building Cities" component will initially examine Atlanta's post-World War II moves to "imagine" itself as a center of corporate energy and cultural renaissance, the texts we analyze (e.g., architecture for business headquarters and for cultural centers like The High Museum of Art) will provide a pattern for comparative study in other locations—such as what our pilot teacher in Michigan can

do to facilitate students' recovery of the history of General Motors' impact on the neighborhoods like Woodward Avenue in Detroit. Overall, by organizing our project around a *framework* for study that is both *locally enacted and nationally interchanged*, we will be able to model and then replicate the kind of comparativist analysis that has become central to pluralistic scholarship in American Studies and related fields.

While the recovery (or “keeping”) aspect of our project is central to achieving the NEH mandate “to improve humanities education in the United States” by “engag[ing] students in sustained, thoughtful study of the humanities,” the “creating” half of our program title is equally important to that goal. Indeed, this project will allow students to see themselves as active composers of local, regional and national communities by moving them from recovery of particular cultures to critical analysis and dissemination of that knowledge. Thus, along with the national themes connecting project participants from around the country, another key dimension of our framework will be the various “creating” modes for teachers and students to develop: print publication, website preparation, exhibition development, and performance. A primary aim will be to avoid the purely celebratory stance sometimes associated with recovery enterprises. So the “performances” (e.g., PowerPoint presentations with images and oral explanations, speeches) occurring in classrooms and for larger audiences will be based on contextual historical analysis, not just un-critical recovery of images and stories. Similarly, an assignment to “Write diary entries as if you were a north Georgia farm wife in 1910” would require comparative cultural research rather than simply intuitive identification with a figure from the past.

Our framework for humanities teaching about regional and national culture will be developed to encourage students' awareness of how their own current community affiliations shape their literacy, and vice versa. Teachers will draw upon Berlin's “notion of rhetoric as a political act involving a dialectical interaction engaging the material, the social, and the individual writer, with language as the agency of mediation” (“Rhetoric and Ideology,” 692). For instance, we will show how teachers and students preparing their own historical exhibit as a class project could enhance their portrayal of the Cherokee removal via comparative analysis with the

historic site at New Echota, Georgia, where some elements in the exhibit (especially those prepared in the 1930s-1950s) still represent a patronizing perspective toward tribal culture of the 1830s. Similarly, using the “Shifting Landscapes, Converging Peoples” theme, high school teachers could guide students gathering oral histories about neighbors’ experiences moving to the Atlanta area, and those pieces could become a performance text using historical drama as a humanities learning tool. But the production of that new “public” text would be analyzed during its composition process as a culture-making enterprise in itself. Therefore, student playwrights working in our project would not simply “collect” personal histories. They would also assess the relative accuracy of their interview subjects’ memories in light of other documents. And they would examine their own communal biases as influencing their writing choices.

With that foundation of socially situated rhetorical analysis, then, “new technologies”—especially the Worldwide Web, desktop publishing, and listservs—will play a major part in this project, but not simply as neutral “tools” to promote learning or disseminate project content. Indeed, we will consistently view such technologies as social forces shaping and shaped by culture. Therefore, we will reflect continually on the *implications* of various technologies we use—e.g., their potential compatibility with program themes of community-building, their tendency to encourage/inhibit diverse visions of community, the likelihood that they might blend medium and message. Thus, besides providing hands-on opportunities for participants to create web pages, contribute to a project list-serv, and try out desktop publishing programs to publish student texts, we will also explore emerging issues related to using new technologies for scholarly production and teaching. For instance, before we ask participating teachers to critique the project’s developing website, we will provide model reviews that address humanities content concerns and evaluate the rhetorics of digital composing environments (e.g., Smulyan’s and Wilson’s recent *American Quarterly* essays). Furthermore, with Professor Randy Bass of the Crossroads Project, a leader in developing technology for the humanities, serving as a member of our National Advisory Board, we will have ongoing access to research exploring how digital environments might promote different modes of argument, how we can/should distinguish

between “story” and “archive,” and how new media may encourage greater awareness of relationships between “design” and disciplinary formations of knowledge. (See “Story and Archive” in *College English*, 61.6, July 1999). With such scholarship to guide us, “technologies” will represent both a fruitful object of study and a rhetorical process in the project. Rather than an “add-on,” the computer will be an integral and an interrogating element in our learning.

Who will be the beneficiaries of this multi-faceted project? Certainly 30+ northwest Georgia teachers and pilot teachers in multiple regions will benefit greatly. Their thousands of students per year and many community groups (e.g., local library partners, historical societies) will benefit too. Other immediate beneficiaries of the project will be many colleagues of our participants and, nationally, teachers affiliated with professional organizations like the National Writing Project and the American Studies Association. Using adaptable themes, with rigorous yet transportable interpretive strategies, our generative thematic framework for humanities study will reach thousands of teachers and students around the country. Meanwhile, our multiple dissemination venues, especially the website, will reach other beneficiaries, including members of the general public interested in studying the relationships between local and national community-formation. Benedict Anderson has observed that a nation “is *imagined* as a community” because it “is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (7). An overarching aim for this project is to generate a strong sense of such “comradeship” among diverse local and regional communities, so that they see themselves as partners in a sustained effort to improve humanities education throughout the nation.

## **2. Content**

The content of our project includes primary materials related to our overarching theme of *Keeping and Creating American Communities* and secondary scholarship focused on methodologies in American Studies and composition/literacy studies. Our project participants in Georgia will develop a national model for writing-centered study of particular social groups’ efforts to define themselves as “Americans” through an array of communal texts. Our primary objects of study (e.g., literary texts like *Pushing the Bear*, historical documents like Freedmen’s

Bureau reports, oral histories on farming north Georgia, architecture in downtown Atlanta, and contemporary journalism on suburban sprawl) will be organized around the national-level themes introduced above in our rationale. With these themes providing a structural system for proactive stewardship (“keeping”) and production of new knowledge (“creating”) about American community cultures, we will study a diverse collection of humanities texts already identified by our participating scholars and teachers. We will also generate humanities resources by gathering additional material for the project archive (e.g., family diaries and letters, transcriptions of oral histories, images of public history sites we visit) and doing interpretive writing (e.g., introductions for artifacts scanned to our website, creative pieces informed by historical study). Structurally, then, our content will invite Georgia teachers and their students to explore and contribute to national community-building concepts by way of local versions of our broad themes:

***Reclaiming Displaced Heritages:*** Re-examining the Cherokee Removal

***Educating for Citizenship:*** Uplifting a “New” South after the Civil War

***Cultivating Homelands:*** Farming Georgia in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

***Building Cities:*** Re-imagining Atlanta as a Cultured, Corporate Center

***Shifting Peoples, Converging Landscapes:*** Reconfiguring 21<sup>st</sup> Century Suburbias

As these themes focus our study on particular moments and spaces in our regional culture, we will formulate case studies of local communities constructing themselves as “Americans” through language, literary texts, architecture, cultural events, public policies, and the physical landscape. Each of these sets of humanities resources will then be adapted for study in secondary and university classrooms in Georgia. But they will also serve as examples for pre-selected pilot teachers in other regions—experienced National Writing Project instructional leaders (teacher consultants) who will develop their own local cases exploring one or more of our broad themes. In all participating classrooms around the country, students will learn via the same two-part approach to “Keeping and Creating American Communities” that teachers will carry out in our summer institutes and continuity program: re-viewing local cases related to our themes

with interdisciplinary methods from American studies, then producing their own interpretive texts while guided by scholarship on communal literacies. Thus, students and their teachers will have ongoing opportunities for comparativist study of regional and national cultures, especially as new primary materials continue to emerge from the writing-centered learning of program participants around the country. By the end the project's funding cycle, teachers in a Michigan classroom studying "Shifting Landscapes, Converging Peoples" by comparing humanities texts associated with new immigration from other countries into the Detroit suburbs will be able to guide students' study via parallel resources from Atlanta—including such previously vetted materials as transcribed oral histories on our project website, student-produced feature articles in one of our print publications, videotapes of student-made performances on "new Americans" in Georgia, and/or displays from a traveling exhibit.

This sustained comparative study will enable teachers and students to analyze differences in particular community cultures, but also to imagine what they would like "America" to be in a new century. Recognizing that local/regional versions of national identity have often been highly contested through the social production of diverse texts, we will analyze such "contact zones" of community-formation in ways that can promote our students' critical thinking about their own place in public culture. (See Pratt, "Contact Zones".) For example, we will review how Georgia settlers seeking to oust the Cherokee from their lands used arguments about "American" destiny to justify their claims, and why the sustained efforts of many Cherokee leaders to adopt "American" ways (e.g., in housing, dress, religious practices) failed to prevent their displacement. We will read nineteenth-century political documents (a Supreme Court case) and journalism (the *Cherokee Phoenix*), as well as secondary historical analyses of northeastern women's petition drives supporting the case of the Cherokee versus Andrew Jackson's rationale for their removal to Oklahoma. But our study will also include a critical review of the history of the New Echota preservation site and an analysis of how/why it has continued to evolve in complex ways since the 1930s (e.g., in films and "restored" buildings). And we will interpret recent re-presentations

of New Echota and the Cherokee in imaginative literature (especially in Diane Glancy's *Pushing the Bear*, but also in the outdoor drama *Unto These Hills*).

Since our collaborative learning will also embody our overarching content for "Keeping and Creating American Communities," we recognize the need for sustained critique of that very process. In this regard, our secondary readings on theories and methodologies in American studies and literacy/composition studies will be crucial.

Recent scholarship on varying interdisciplinary approaches for stewardship of public culture will set the "keeping" dimension of our work in a critical context. For instance, we will use Steven Watts' "American Studies and Americans: A Crank's Critique" to counterbalance our own project's affirmation of diversity and our efforts to employ analytical tools (e.g., race, gender, class) emphasizing pluralism with a reasoned call for connecting the study of public culture to "desires for cultural integration" and "social cohesion." To establish a transportable model for studying American communities, we will examine other proactive American studies collaboratives, such as Dolores Hayden's *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* as well as American Studies Association presidential addresses from recent years (e.g., Mary Helen Washington's, Janice Radway's, Mary Kelley's) to refine our vision of the best means and ends for studying public culture. While reviewing our own project director's *American Quarterly* essay on "'Linking the Secondary Schools and the University'" will remind us of connections between public schoolrooms and American public community-formation, sustained interactions with our National Advisory Board members—all of whom are active in community-oriented scholarship—will provide other "living" texts to guide our enterprise.

Parallel work in literacy/composition studies will help us continually question our own recursive processes for "creating" new knowledge about local and national communities as a kind of situated social composing. For example, Beth Daniell's 1999 essay on "Connecting Composition to Culture" will position our own work as contributing to "the little narratives of literacy" which see "that literacy," like community, is "multiple, contextual, and ideological" (403). Joining others in composition studies who have moved beyond a view of writing (and

writing instruction) as a linear process, we will study humanities-oriented theories of composition in a “post-process” framework emphasizing the interactive relationships among authors, audiences, and the social contexts of both. These readings will aid participating teachers’ work with students to examine their own cultural biases as they write. Our study of social-epistemic scholarship in composition/literacy studies will also promote students’ reading of primary and secondary texts related to our themes as both shaped by and shaping their cultural contexts, rather than simply seeing historical documents and narratives as transparent, reliable windows into the past.

Especially in the second year of our program, this general conception of literacy as socially constructed will be supplemented by more specific study of our four dissemination modes—websites, print publications, performances, and exhibits—as specific spaces and practices where literacy communities are expressed and potentially reshaped. Analyzing similarities and differences among these dissemination modes, we will view “textual production” as a culturally significant approach to community-building. (See syllabus for readings.)

Although we view the content of our project as more recursive than sequential, we have planned several broad stages for our work. (See appendix overview). In year one, we will concentrate on developing regionally inflected resources for the five project themes. In years two and three, we will concentrate on elaborating our themes; experimenting with new sub-themes; exploring resources developed by our pilot teachers in other regions; and disseminating to a larger national audience. At the heart of the collaborative will be two multi-week summer institutes (in 2000 and 2001) bringing together leading humanities scholars from multiple disciplines with twenty-five outstanding teachers already selected through a competitive process so that they could contribute to the shape of the proposal itself. (See syllabi for the two summer institutes in the appendix.) In summer 2000, after whole-group study introducing our framework’s components, participating teachers will work in small-group teams to explore one topic in depth and to gather new primary resources for teachers and secondary students to study our themes. During the academic year, while field-testing our model, the group will use teacher research

strategies to evaluate their work while disseminating the model to other educators around the country. In the second summer, participants will reunite to expand our core content by launching new variations of our initial local themes (e.g., adding "Investigating the History of Brer Rabbit" to our "Reclaiming Displaced Heritages" component). A small group of secondary students, chosen competitively based on application and work samples, will join a few days of the institute to help pilot-test approaches for "creating" new humanities resources through our major dissemination modes: print publications, performances, web pages, and exhibits. Using expertise gained from state humanities council-funded programs with similar teacher-pupil collaboration, we will extend the project's direct impact to students as they help create new program resources.

### **3. Institutional Context**

The "Keeping and Creating American Communities" program will draw on a rich cluster of longstanding institutional relationships to bring together talented humanities teachers with mentor teachers and scholars from secondary classrooms and universities. While the project has its own identity and goals, it builds on a firm foundation of several earlier humanities programs linking Kennesaw State faculty and key scholars affiliated with the American Studies Association (ASA) to local and national networks of outstanding teachers through the National Writing Project (NWP) teachers-teaching-teachers program. In particular, the project will be led by the Kennesaw Mountain Writing Project, an NWP site well known for collegial relationships with humanities scholars, leadership in developing interdisciplinary curricula, and dissemination of such work to diverse audiences around the country.

The KMWP has already sponsored two Georgia Humanities Council-funded teacher enrichment projects ("What It Means to be an American" and "The Journey from Childhood to Adulthood") and two multi-year NEH programs—"Domesticating the Secondary Canon" and "Making American Literatures" (MAL). The latter project has played a crucial role in preparing the KMWP to lead our new initiative on "Keeping and Creating American Communities," since MAL involved sustained collaboration by the KMWP with partner sites in Michigan and

California; provided multiple, diverse opportunities for national-level dissemination (e.g., through a website, a volume of teacher essays currently in press, and numerous presentations at national conferences); and, most importantly, established our ability to explore complex humanities topics in a recursive yet productive way. Specifically, the content and the lived experience of the MAL project—with its emphasis on “American Literatures” as a dynamic social process played out differently in diverse locales—prompted our teacher-participants’ critical thinking about the power of regionalism and its relation to nationalism. Thus, “Keeping and Creating American Communities” represents both an increased emphasis on local culture and a heightened awareness of the interactive elements that shape that culture, in ways that we now believe are better understood through comparative study like that promoted via our exchanges with other teachers in the MAL program. With that in mind, teachers from the MAL project, both in Georgia and elsewhere, will be leaders for our new initiative (e.g., Ida Turpin in Michigan, who will be a pilot teacher for the new program). In practical terms, our creation of resources for teaching American literatures through the MAL program was constantly enhanced by collaboration with the two other NWP-affiliated centers at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and the University of California, Berkeley. Thus, on a logistical level, this new program will benefit from our prior experience in cross-region collaboration. For example, our “MAL” collaboration convinced us that using technology to connect teachers creating new humanities resources could only be truly effective when coupled with some opportunities to meet in person. (See the excerpt from our final performance report for that project, as well as the external evaluator’s report, in the appendix.)

Other past cross-NWP-site collaborations will support our new program as well. For instance, we will draw on energizing professional development experiences key teacher consultants at our NWP site have had through work as one of only 18 NWP sites selected to participate in Project Outreach, an NWP-guided effort sponsored by the DeWitt Wallace Reader’s Digest Foundation to enhance leadership opportunities for under-represented minority teachers in the NWP and to provide new models of professional development for teachers of at-risk students.

Additionally, ideas for the content of our proposal and for the writing-centered, inquiry-based teaching we hope to promote have been shaped by earlier collaboration between our NWP site and two of our partners for this program, the Oklahoma City and Red Cedar Writing Projects, whose leaders facilitated our involvement in the multi-year Write for Your Life project developing approaches for adolescents' guided study of key issues in their own lives. Now, Red Cedar teacher co-director Diana Mitchell will be serving on the National Advisory Board for this project. Similarly, we are capitalizing on past collaborations with our nearest NWP "relative," the Peachtree Urban Writing Project, by including 5 teachers from that site in our participant group, helping us bring together educators from inner-city settings with colleagues from rural, suburban, and ex-urban districts, while forming a team representative of the multiple diversities evident in today's American classrooms.

Overall, our experiences with cross-site NWP collaboration have also exposed us to numerous models for national dissemination that we will be drawing upon for this project. The anthology of essays (*Making American Literatures*) being edited by Pete Shaheen and Anne Ruggles Gere of the Michigan center for that project provides just one tangible example of our expertise at national-level dissemination, as several of the pieces in that volume are by teachers from our site, and all of them involve some kind of effort to collaborate with others outside the classroom (e.g., parents, teachers in other schools, and even students in other regions). Similarly, cross-site work we have done under the auspices of the NWP-sponsored Rural Sites Network has given a number of the teacher consultants participating in our "Keeping and Creating American Communities" valuable experience in collaborating with teachers from diverse settings for broad dissemination of resources from professional development initiatives. Such expertise will help make our relationships with other NWP sites in this program interactive, as pilot teachers in other regions provide ongoing critique of our efforts even as they also contribute to it.

While the KMWP's identity as a notably proactive NWP site makes it a very appropriate leader for the "Keeping and Creating American Communities," we will also benefit tremendously from our links with Kennesaw State University, area school districts, and various humanities-

oriented community organizations. At KSU, we will be able to tap into diverse resources such as the Center for Suburban Studies, the Regional Center for History and Culture, and a just-forming Center for Hispanic Studies, all of which are providing faculty time and material contributions to the program. Teacher education is central to KSU's overall mission, with humanities departments such as English and History actively involved in certification and professional degree programs. Our NWP site has regularly capitalized on that tradition. Thus, the KSU scholar-teachers on this project team will be building on past collaborations that have already established a strong sense of community linking schoolteachers with our professorate. As project faculty member Professor Dede Yow observed in an essay growing out of our NEH-funded "Domesticating the Secondary Canon" project, "the culture of our University" has already begun to promote "genuine exchange and shared growth" through "a visible process of integration, breaking down the . . . barriers" that normally separate post-secondary educators from their colleagues in schools (*American Quarterly*, December 1998, 795).

With the Georgia team for "Keeping and Creating American Communities" taking on the prime responsibility for initial development of our nationally applicable humanities teaching model, we are fortunate to have already established strong relationships with numerous community organizations. The Auburn Avenue Library (focused on African-American Culture) and the Atlanta History Center are just two partners who have actively supported past projects such as "Domesticating the Secondary Canon." Meanwhile, preparations for "Keeping and Creating American Communities" have fostered new ties with the Cherokee and Douglas county historical societies, The High Museum of Art, and the Forsyth County Library association.

Like the NWP sites around the country who have recruited outstanding pilot teachers for this project, area school districts in Georgia have shown their confidence that the "Keeping and Creating American Communities" program will positively affect teaching and learning among their constituencies by helping us identify the most outstanding participants possible and even, in one case, by pledging cash support for the project as an investment in its potential to prepare leadership for future staff development enterprises within the district. (See appendix).

Finally, by assembling scholars for our National Advisory Board from active leaders in the American Studies Association, we are building a network of faculty within that organization whose interest in community/schools outreach can inform our initiative, especially its extension of the framework to other regions. So, with the encouragement of ASA president Mary Kelley and executive director John Stephens, we have scheduled our annual advisory board meeting to take place during the ASA convention, and we look forward to bringing our pilot teachers and representatives of our local team into proactive contact with the scholars on the advisory board there. (See Stephens' letter in the appendix).

#### **4. Project Staff and Participants**

Project director Sarah Robbins has extensive experience leading collaborative programs in the humanities. She is the founding director of Kennesaw's National Writing Project site and has served as co-director of KSU's 1995-96 NEH project, "Domesticating the Secondary Canon," as well as the multi-site "Making American Literatures" program. She is a member of the National Writing Project's directors' task force and is co-chair of the American Studies Association's committee on secondary education. Robbins has done extensive research in the scholarship of teaching, including serving as a faculty investigator for the ASA's Crossroads project on teaching with technology. At Kennesaw, Robbins teaches graduate and undergraduate courses on community literacies, multi-ethnic American literatures, nineteenth-century American women writers, professional authorship in the United States, and the place of writing in American culture. With historian Ann Pullen, she has repeatedly garnered University of Georgia System funding to support curriculum development for technology-infused, interdisciplinary teaching on gender and American culture.

Robbins has published in diverse academic journals (e.g. *Signs*, *Studies in American Fiction*, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, *Children's Literature Quarterly*, *English Education*) and on a range of topics related to the American literary canon, genre history and the role of the author in nineteenth-century American culture. Robbins has also written extensively on the history of humanities pedagogy, on classroom-based inquiry research, and on integrating literature and

writing instruction. Winner of the 1998 Constance Rourke prize for the best article in the ASA's *American Quarterly*, Robbins is currently at work on a book about nineteenth-century American middle-class women's literary pedagogy and its role in shaping American educational practices, gendered social roles, and American literary traditions.

Lead teacher coordinator for this project is Mimi Dyer, a 1996 KMWP Summer Fellow and a graduate of KSU's Master of Arts in Professional Writing program (MAPW). She has taught in the KMWP Summer Honors Program for high school students and is an award-winning teacher in Forsyth County Schools. Dyer is currently directing a Rural Sites Network NWP mini-grant, "Shifting Rural Landscapes, Changing Classroom Spaces," to develop humanities resources addressing cultural tensions between long-time rural community members and those who have moved in to create a suburban environment. This technology-infused, writing-based program inspired one of the themes—Shifting Landscapes, Converging Peoples—for our current NEH proposal. Dyer was local webmaster for the "Making American Literatures" project and has contributed a chapter entitled "Invitation to Anthologize" to our forthcoming MAL essay collection. She has also been webmaster for the entire KMWP site. (See appendix).

Besides underscoring the wisdom of designating a teacher coordinator for this project, our experience with the MAL program also highlighted the value of having teacher consultants drawing on their own particular areas of expertise to collaborate with university faculty providing leadership for such programs. (Said another way, our delivery model for this project will affirm the NWP's teachers-teaching-teachers model and promote non-hierarchical collaboration between university scholars and schoolteachers by having master teachers take on responsibilities for facilitating the program via consulting roles of equal importance to the scholars'). Accordingly, as we did for the MAL project, we are designating several outstanding teacher leaders from our NWP site as coordinators of specific initiatives for this program. All of them have past experience helping lead Project Outreach, MAL, or the Rural Sites Network. In this case, consistent with the balanced emphasis we are placing on "keeping" and "creating" local/national cultures, we have selected coordinators both for the project's humanities themes and for our

dissemination modes. (See the chart of our key project personnel in the appendix). The teacher-coordinators (including Mimi Dyer, profiled above) will be as follows:

**Dorothy Augustine-Howard**, Stephenson Middle School—President of the Georgia Council of Teachers of English and a Project Outreach manager for Dekalb County schools, Dorothy has recently explored her Native American roots six generations back and obtained court transcripts of an ancestor’s Freedman petition, so she is eager to examine aspects of the Cherokees’ interactions with other races as she leads our exploration of the “Reclaiming Displaced Heritages” theme.

**Peggy Corbett**, Sequoyah High School—A Delta Kappa Society Outstanding Educator who is active in the state Department of Education SAT Training Force and the Cherokee Historical Society, Peggy was a 1998 KMWP summer fellow. She will build on her expertise as a Rural Sites Network teacher consultant to coordinate this project’s focus on “Cultivating Homelands.”

**Gwen Williams**—Director of the Peachtree Urban Writing Project housed at Georgia State University in Atlanta, Gwen worked previously as a middle school teacher for Atlanta Public Schools. Drawing on her longstanding experience in the Foxfire program, Gwen will coordinate our "Educating for Citizenship" theme.

**Emmanuel Martin**, Stephenson High School—A published creative writer and syndicated cartoonist, Emmanuel is a graduate of KSU’s MAPW program and served as a lead teacher for the MAL project. A visual design specialist, he will coordinate our “Building Cities” theme.

**Gerri Hajduk**, Wheeler High School—Winner of multiple STAR teacher awards and currently working as the history teacher in a nationally recognized American Studies team, Gerri was a fellow in the “Domesticating the Secondary Canon” project and the MAL program. She will build on her daily experiences teaching in a school with an ethnically diverse, internationalized student body to coordinate our “Shifting Landscapes, Converging Peoples” theme.

**Traci Blanchard**, Lassiter High School—A 1997 KMWP summer fellow, Traci has drawn upon computer skills acquired through KSU’s MAPW program to develop an interactive creative writing website (“The Writing Room”) sponsored by the KMWP to promote online peer workshopping of creative writing. Traci will be webmaster for this proposed project.

**Bernadette Lambert**, Literacy Specialist, Cobb County Schools—A local coordinator for both Project Outreach and MAL, Bernadette has been an active leader for our NWP site since joining us as a 1996 summer fellow. Currently serving as a curriculum specialist supporting several middle schools designated “at-risk” by the state, Bernadette is also writing about her teaching for such publications as the *NWP Quarterly*. A graduate of KSU’s MAPW program, a playwright and a fiction-writer specializing in young audiences, she will lead our performance initiatives.

**Dave Winter**, Wheeler High School—Associate director of the MAL project in Georgia, Dave was also a 1995-96 fellow for the “Domesticating the Secondary Canon.” He has written for a wide variety of publications focused on teaching in the humanities. Faculty advisor for multiple award-winning student publications, Dave will be print publications coordinator.

Like the local teacher leaders for this project, the educators who will pilot our framework in other regions around the country have been selected because of their special talents. Chosen in consultation with Elyse Eidman-Aadahl, associate director of the NWP, and local site directors, these participants will provide ongoing critique of our work while also developing local adaptations for their own teaching contexts. Ida Turpin, for instance, already has strong ties to our work via her participation on the Michigan team for MAL, which included development of several model interdisciplinary units emphasizing comparative study of ethnic cultures. Similarly, bilingual educator Norma Mota Altman of the UCLA Writing Project brings unique expertise from teacher research on second-language learning. All pilot teachers have committed to attend gatherings of our National Advisory Board, to visit our local project at least once (or invite members of our local team to their home school), to provide formative critique of the website, and to stay in close contact with our team via the project listserv. All pilot teachers will

also develop at least one application of our framework in their local context, maintain a reflective record of that process, and share it with our project participants informally and in writing.

Because all pilot teachers are leaders at their local NWP sites, they can disseminate our work to a significant community of teachers, with some site directors (e.g., Joye Alberts in Oklahoma) already seeking funding for more sustained dissemination in their regions. (See appendix letter).

Our National Advisory Board of American Studies scholars is equally impressive in the scope and depth of expertise they will bring—in fact, have already brought—to this program. The degree of commitment they are making is evident in their having already brainstormed elements of our conceptualization, critiqued proposal drafts, suggested specific texts or personnel resources, and/or contributed ideas for the schedule of events. In that sense, the vitae of Randy Bass, Thadious Davis, Paul Lauter, and David Scobey in our appendix tell only part of the story of their importance to this enterprise. Joined by lead teacher member Diana Mitchell of the Red Cedar Writing Project and lead evaluator Cristine Levenduski, board members will collaborate with our pilot teachers to provide formative evaluation of our work throughout the project. (See evaluation plan below.) Supplementing our annual meetings, advisory board members will be use the listserv and visits to our website to monitor our work’s progress. However, consistent with the recommendations of our external evaluator for the MAL program, each advisory board member (including the lead teacher Mitchell) will visit our local site at least once as a teaching scholar. The opportunity to get to know participants personally, to see our work in action, and to shape that work directly will reinforce board members’ commitment, improve their ability to offer useful critique, and strengthen all participants’ sense of the project’s national impact and identity. As David Shumway observed in a recent written response to essays being published as part of the ASA Crossroads project, “Even if we grant that a nurturing pedagogical community is at least sometimes a worthy goal, it is not clear that cyberspace is likely to promote the development of such a community,” since “electronic communication can augment face-to-face interaction, but . . . should not replace it.”

Like the other contributors identified in this proposal, the 16 outstanding teachers who will participate as summer fellows and Georgia-based developers of our framework have already made significant contributions to the vision for “Keeping and Creating American Communities.” After being selected via a competitive application process, this group assembled with the teacher mentors identified above to brainstorm ideas for refining this proposal, especially its local versions of our national themes and its dissemination plans. Following up that planning session with individual review of their own potential contributions to the program, each teacher submitted an individual commitment form, including a pledge to participate regularly on the project listserv, provide review of work-in-progress via a private website, attend monthly school-year meetings, maintain a record of classroom inquiry (for teacher research), as well as participate in both summer institutes. This energetic team of fellows aptly represents the diversity increasingly evident in American classrooms. They also come from a variety of humanities subject areas and teaching levels, ranging from intermediate grades through freshman composition.

Able complementing the work of our advisory board as teaching scholars for the project will be a cadre of faculty members from Kennesaw State and several other visiting scholars (e.g., Dana White, Diane Glancy). KSU faculty from departments of literature, history, foreign language, communications, composition, creative writing and sociology will lead sessions during summer institutes and the school-year continuity program, with several also serving as consultants for the teams of teachers and secondary students who will develop specific guidelines and models for our dissemination modes during the summer institute of 2001.

## **5. Evaluation**

Evaluation for the project will be ongoing. Consistent with NWP emphasis on metacognitive learning through self-evaluative writing, formative assessment will include all Georgia participants’ and pilot teachers’ regular reflective writing about their learning during program events and their efforts to apply that learning in their teaching. Via both small-group meetings and whole-team gatherings, several sessions per year will include time for participants to share their own evaluations of project goals and strategies. Both the listserv and the private

website will provide ongoing opportunities for collaborative formative assessment. Pilot teachers’ reports of their classroom efforts at application, for instance, can be circulated using such technologies.

As outlined in section 4, the National Advisory Board will also be providing formative evaluation at their annual meetings and during their visits to our main project site at KSU. Important elements in their formative evaluations will include debriefings after the sessions they lead for participating teachers, as well as discussions during the board meetings and online.

Besides serving as chair of the advisory board, lead evaluator Cristine Levenduski will produce the most sustained formative critique of our work and will write both an interim and a final evaluation, including syntheses of responses from annual meetings of the board and other data. During Levenduski’s work with the MAL project as a visiting scholar, she developed a strong connection to our NWP site’s community of teachers, so that she has already provided crucial guidance for this project. The proximity of Emory to Kennesaw will enable Levenduski to stay in close personal contact with our work for this new project.

In both formative and summative evaluation, criteria will be closely aligned with the project’s overarching goals. The table below provides an overview.

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Methods of Evaluation</b>
Does the project develop rich humanities resources related to program content (key themes) and useful in classrooms both locally and nationally? [“keeping”]	reflective analysis by teacher participants (e.g., on teaching experiences) and pilot teachers; analyses by advisory board members after work sessions with teachers and formative comments via email on the project listserv
Does the project stimulate high-quality student and teacher-made texts related to project themes via the four dissemination modes? [“creating”]	teacher participants’ blind review of student submissions from project classrooms; formative and summative responses from local faculty facilitating dissemination activities in each mode; advisory board responses to student products
Does the project improve participating teachers’ understanding of humanities content, their ability to use the project framework effectively in their classrooms, and their ability to serve as influential leaders in a proactive community promoting	participant surveys as analyzed by advisory board, director, and lead evaluator; in-depth interviews with several teachers; monitoring of the quantity of and quality professional development activities participants lead for themselves and others (e.g.,

writing-centered, interdisciplinary humanities education?	maintaining attendance figures for school-year sessions and interpreting written evaluations when participants hold dissemination sessions)
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## 6. Follow-up and Dissemination

As a multi-year program, *Keeping and Creating American Communities* will integrate academic-year continuity events with the institutes and small-team gatherings scheduled during the summers of 2000 and 2001. School-year sessions will take full advantage of participants' varying experiences as teachers. That is, comparative analysis of our diverse applications of the project framework will elaborate our project's emphasis on local communities rather than signal that teachers may have "failed" if specific resources we develop together in the summer do not easily transfer to particular teaching environments. Seeing classrooms themselves as diverse American communities, we will encourage participants to try viewing their own instructional settings as participant observers in local cultures. An equally important aspect of our follow-up efforts will be the explicit invitations we issue to students to see themselves as "keeping and creating American communities." Thus, while many of the particular primary and secondary texts we study together during summer sessions will not be developmentally appropriate for students, we will aim for a conceptual and methodological transfer of learning from the participants' summer experiences to their own classrooms. In other words, summer sessions will be organized to provide opportunities for participants to do versions of what their students will do during the academic year. At the institutes, participants will read primary and secondary resources in multiple media, seek out new resources related to our themes (e.g., public sites, archival records, artifacts of everyday life), and create new resources by interpreting such materials and producing new texts of their own. "Follow-up" work during the school year, then, will involve facilitating and evaluating participants' efforts to have their students carry out parallel inquiry and composition.

Like other aspects of our project, dissemination will be multi-faceted and ongoing, with participants' prior experience as professional development leaders a major advantage. One important and immediate audience will be teachers throughout Georgia, especially those served

by the Kennesaw Mountain Writing Project and the Peachtree Urban Writing Project. Since both sites regularly offer professional development programs for area teachers, including workshops and staff development courses through area school districts, this project will have immediate avenues of dissemination available. Regionally, gatherings such as the Georgia Council of Teachers of English convention, History Day celebrations, the Georgia Write Now conference, and the regional American Studies (SASA) meeting in Atlanta will provide very appropriate audiences for workshops and roundtables growing out of the project. Nationally, the NWP network will provide significant support for dissemination through such venues as the annual meeting (which always includes breakout sessions for projects like ours) and the *NWP Quarterly*. In addition, through our connections with the ASA committee on secondary education, we will have opportunities to prepare sessions for the organization's Focus on Teaching Day, which annually targets secondary teachers in the region where the convention is being held (Detroit in 2000, Washington in 2001).

In the dissemination modes highlighting student texts, our performances and exhibits will target mainly regional audiences, whereas our website and print publications will reach national ones. For instance, we can draw on our past work using chapbooks to publish student writing useful to classrooms in other regions, and we have already designed a draft index page with the goal of highlighting the national dimensions of our project for the website. While the resources that appear there initially will focus on our local versions of the project themes, we have established a framework for hypertextual connections with regional variations like those we anticipate coming from our pilot teachers' classrooms. (See appendix for the draft index page).