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Remembering Donald H. Graves

Date: October 6, 2010**Summary:** The National Writing Project remembers Donald H. Graves, a pioneer in education whose work influenced countless Writing Project teachers over several decades.

The National Writing Project joins the teaching and writing community in expressing its condolences on the passing of Donald H. Graves, professor emeritus of education at the University of New Hampshire and expert in the field of teaching and writing.

Graves, who inspired generations of Writing Project teachers, passed away on September 28, 2010, in Falmouth, Maine. You can post a reflection of Graves on [NWP's Facebook page](#) or the [Heinemann website](#).

Graves was born in Fall River, Mass., the son of a school principal and a nurse. After serving in the Coast Guard, Graves taught elementary school and worked as a school principal. He then obtained his Masters in Education from Bridgewater State College in Massachusetts.

In 1973, he earned his doctorate in education from the University of Buffalo, and his writing career took off after that. In 1976, he established the Writing Process Laboratory at the University of New Hampshire. In 1983, he published the first of his paradigm-shifting books, *Writing: Teachers & Children at Work*.

Writing and Teaching Writing: A Love Story

Graves's books—he published 26 books in 25 years—were held dear by many in the teaching profession, including Writing Project teachers. Two of his books were seminal works in the teaching of writing and are frequently referred to: *Writing: Teachers & Children at Work* and *A Fresh Look at Writing*.

A 1984 [review](#) of *Writing: Teachers & Children at Work* on the NWP website included this paragraph: "*Writing* IS a love story. It glows with Graves' love of children, of writing, and of teaching. For those of us fortunate to have attended a Graves workshop, *Writing* is an extension of that experience. His calm, wise voice sounds on every page. Readers still unacquainted with Donald Graves will delight in encountering his warm, caring, supportive personality and his gentle humor."

In an interview with Scholastic's [Instructor Magazine](#), Graves was asked what he recommend teachers do when teaching writing, and he responded with an answer that resonates with the core of NWP's principles: to be a successful teacher of writing, teachers must write themselves.

"Write yourself. Invite children to do something you're already doing. If you're not doing it, 'Hey,' the kids say, 'I can't wait to grow up and not have to write, like you.' They know. And for the short term and the long term, you'll be doing yourself a favor by writing. All of us need it as a survival tool in a very complex world. The wonderful thing about writing is that it separates the meaningless and the trivial from what is really important. So we need it for ourselves and then we need to invite children to do what we're doing. You can't ask someone to sing a duet with you until you know the tune yourself."



Donald Graves Tells Us How To Get a Writing Class Started

The wonderful thing about writing is that it separates the meaningless and the trivial from what is really important.

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