

**Title of Session:** AAMU Writing Project - Creating Authentic Audiences

**Moderator:** Sandra Shattuck

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Room: After School Online

BJ: while you're waiting, Heather and Neil, please read the 10 steps above this chat window

NeilMH: OK

HeatherRH: Reading...

BJ: Please let us know if you have any questions, Heather and Neil

BJ: do you understand how to detach the text window?

HeatherRH: Yes, I just tried it out.

NeilMH: Yes

BJ: terrific! How about if we start with introductions?

BJ: I'm a helpdesk volunteer for Tapped In and an art teacher in Pennsylvania

SandraS: I'm a new helpdesk volunteer for Tapped In !!! and teach in the English dept. at Alabama A&M University

BJ: since we have a small group, we can be a little less formal. Let us know if you have questions or if we're going too fast.

HeatherRH: I'm a 2nd grade teacher in Long Beach, CA

BJ . o O ( take your time, Neil ;- )

NeilMH: I'm in the masters program for secondary education at the University of Oregon, in mathematics just sitting in to see how a tapped in discussion goes.

SandraS: excellent!

SandraS: welcome, all

SandraS: oops, I think BJ is supposed to introduce me, or something

SandraS: this is my second time leading an ASO

SandraS: and the first time was just a loose discussion

BJ: I think you'll find that Sandra has some information relevant to your discipline, Neil

BJ: Sandra, you did a fine job introducing yourself ;-)

NeilMH: oO[great!]

SandraS bows thanks to BJ

BJ . o O ( Sandy is our discussion leader )

SandraS: how about if I give a bit of background and then we can jump in?

SandraS: here goes:

BJ listens

SandraS: I just participated this past summer in Alabama A&M's Writing Project

SandraS: The National Writing Project is a faculty development project

SandraS: begun in 1973 at Berkeley

SandraS: the hypothesis is that writing is a way for students to learn in any discipline

SandraS: and that teachers who learn to be better writers

SandraS: also teach writing better

SandraS: and that teachers are the best teachers of other teachers

SandraS: that's the National Writing Project's philosophy in a simplified nutshell  
SandraS: it's one of the longest-acting faculty development projects around  
SandraS: and part of the project are summer institutes at the 175 sites around the nation  
SandraS: and in Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico...  
SandraS: summer institutes invite K-12 folks from all disciplines  
SandraS: there's usually no more than one college person  
SandraS: that was me this last summer  
SandraS: and the site is always housed at a university  
SandraS: ok, that's the National Writing Project  
SandraS: we had a dynamic group at AAMU (that's the acronym I'll use for Alabama A&M)  
SandraS: which is an historically black college  
SandraS: our participants were split pretty much half mostly anglo, half black  
SandraS: and we had ALL English teachers, from 1st grade to 12th grade  
SandraS: but in fact, Neil, you may know this  
SandraS: the National Council of Mathematics Teachers has been in the forefront of devising writing  
SandraS: assignments to aid in the learning of math  
SandraS: what tends to prevent teachers from other disciplines than English from teaching writing is that they tend not to trust their abilities to write  
SandraS: usually this stems from a fairly traditional understanding of writing as correcting grammar  
SandraS: are you all still with me?  
NeilMH: yes  
BJ: Yes, thanks  
HeatherRH: Yes, thank you :-)  
SandraS: ok, I promise, I'll quit talking in a sec....and we can discuss  
SandraS: so part of the AAMU Writing Project has been to set up these monthly ASO's with certain topics in an attempt to spread the Writing Project and simply to network across the nation  
SandraS: the notion of authentic audience is one that intrigued me when a 9th grade teacher gave a teacher demonstration on a project she did called A-Z Autobiography  
SandraS: 9th grade English students wrote a children's picture book, A-Z, as an autobiography  
SandraS: and created the book  
SandraS: and then went to an elementary school to read the books they'd written  
SandraS: I am often frustrated in my classes that students write essay exams, papers for me  
SandraS: even though I have peer reviews,  
SandraS: and students see that their peers will read their works  
SandraS: I'd like to find a more authentic audience  
SandraS: one that moves the students to be more impassioned with their work  
SandraS: So....I've been brainstorming how to do that.  
SandraS: This session is not one where I'm going to be an expert.  
SandraS: I have done some research.  
SandraS: But I'd like to ask everyone here what they understand as an authentic audience

SandraS: or authentic learning

SandraS: and maybe how you already use it

SandraS stops talking

BJ: is peer review a form of an authentic audience?

SandraS: a question I have myself

NeilMH: The term is new to me. As a mathematician, of course, I would like a definition.

SandraS bows to mathematician

BJ smiles

SandraS: Neil, is the term "authentic audience" or "peer review" new to you

NeilMH: authentic audience

BJ wonders if Heather has any suggestions

SandraS wonders also

SandraS: um, ok, here's a great site

BJ: I'm familiar with authentic sources/resources...such as photographs and documents from a specific event or time period

SandraS: the North Dakota Teaching with Technology Initiative has a good definition

SandraS: <http://www.ndtwt.org/Blackboard/P2SST2/authenticlearning.htm>

SandraS: I can summarize it, but I wanted folks to have the URL

BJ: I think we have two topics...authentic learning and authentic audiences

SandraS: Heather & Neil, are you ready to go on?

HeatherRH: Yes, I've read the URL.

SandraS: OK

NeilMH: yes, thanks

SandraS: there are 4 points that the ND Tech Initiative gives

SandraS: but basically I distill it down to personal frame of reference

SandraS: in other words, the student is committed to or impassioned by the assignment in some way

SandraS: I also like the 4th item -- real issues directed towards real audiences

SandraS: and I like the example of writing an oral history and then reading it to an historical society

SandraS: for a math student, an authentic learning activity might connect the processes of addition and subtraction with a trip to the grocery store

BJ: or buying a car?

SandraS: ooh, good point

SandraS: BJ's question about peer review is one I'm struggling with

SandraS: some of the research says that peer reviews are also fabricated audiences

SandraS: like the teacher

SandraS: or maybe artificial audience is more like it

SandraS: There's another project called the Buddy Project, where high school students buddy up with elementary school students and they write books -- the 12th graders

SandraS: don't worry about the grade so much

SandraS: they are concerned that what they write moves their audience, in other words, their elementary school buddy

HeatherRH: I've had Buddy Readers read to my second graders

BJ: what if you have two teams...one team researches one kind of car and another team does the same for another vehicle...then each team tries to convince the other to purchase

their choice

SandraS: that would still be an artificial audience

SandraS: however, if your audience were car salesmen

SandraS: oops

SandraS: car salespeople

SandraS: I'm not sure that's a clear example

SandraS: Heather, can you tell us about your Buddy experience?

SandraS: I'm interested in what you did

BJ nods. I think I understand.

HeatherRH: The students from the high school across the street write fantasy stories, then share them with small groups of students. Afterward, my students write a friendly letter in return to tell them how they enjoyed their writing and to make suggestions.

SandraS: and how does the experience affect your students? and the high school students?

BJ . o O ( it would be fun for your students to turn the stories into a readers theater and then perform the story for the authors )

SandraS: ooh, that would be cool, too

SandraS: even more interdisciplinary

BJ: they could make the changes they wanted to the story, too

HeatherRH: My students are motivated to write for an audience and to create. I'm not exactly sure of the purpose for the high school students. Their teacher has not discussed it with me.

NeilMH: Did the high school students have a good sense of what was appropriate for elementary school students?

SandraS: oh, that's interesting.

HeatherRH: Reader's Theater would be very fun!

SandraS: I never really thought that the listeners would be motivated to write

SandraS: that's a great question, Neil

NeilMH: I ask because my 11 year old son's sense of fantasy is sometimes a bit gruesome.

SandraS nods, her 11 yr old son is also gruesome

HeatherRH: They really have written some interesting adventure stories. I've never read anything inappropriate from them. Their teacher reads them over first. Maybe only the best stories are selected for the exchange.

SandraS: I think the point is that the high school students have to think very carefully about their audience

SandraS: they're not writing so much for the teacher

SandraS: but they've got to hook the elementary student

SandraS: so they've got to do their research

SandraS: maybe see what younger siblings like

SandraS: much different from trying to figure out what kind of fantasy story will receive an A from the teacher

SandraS: another part of the authentic audience is that there is feedback

SandraS: the high school students who come to Heather's class receive letters from Heather's students and feedback

SandraS: that's like a peer review

SandraS: but it's more of an audience review  
SandraS: Heather, do you ask your students to be critical?  
BJ . o O ( which is even better )  
SandraS nods  
SandraS: I know they're second graders  
SandraS: but do you use the letter as a writing assignment?  
SandraS: your students are also getting an authentic audience when they write their letters to the high school students  
HeatherRH: I tell them to give suggestions for what improvements they could make. Only some of their suggestions are probably valuable to the writers.  
SandraS: so their letter-writing should affect their writing  
SandraS: but I'm assuming the letter-writing is valuable to the students who write the letters?  
HeatherRH: Definitely!  
SandraS: So with one Buddy experience, you've got authentic audiences going both ways  
SandraS: high school students write books for elementary students  
SandraS: elementary students write letters to the high school students  
SandraS: teachers are involved  
SandraS: but more as facilitators, I think  
HeatherRH: yes, I agree  
SandraS: are there other instances you use authentic audiences, Heather?  
SandraS: and Neil, do you use writing in your math classes?  
NeilMH: I am taking education and technology classes these days. I took all my math ten years ago.  
HeatherRH: well, my students write poems and essays to read to a special person in their family or their life.  
HeatherRH: they read them at an assembly we have during Feb.  
SandraS: that's exciting  
HeatherRH: I don't know how authentic it is, though???  
SandraS: good question  
SandraS: I think that's pretty authentic  
SandraS: although family can be a tough audience  
HeatherRH: yes, the students have been very eager to write for this purpose every year, so it is valuable.  
SandraS: BJ gave an excellent example earlier in a private message to me about writing a nutrition plan and presenting it to a nutritionist  
SandraS: did I get that right, BJ?  
BJ nods. The plan could include purchasing the groceries and planning a menu  
SandraS: for math classes, writing assignments tend to include narratives of how one solves a problem  
SandraS: let's say the class is 11th grade and students are working on formulas involving velocity  
SandraS: I wonder how you could find authentic audiences?  
BJ: a race car driver?  
SandraS: ah....  
SandraS: now that sounds like fun

SandraS: or a roller coaster designer

NeilMH: Or unfortunately, any teenage boy who just got his license

SandraS: ouch

SandraS: but certainly relevant

SandraS: one could talk about car insurance.....

SandraS: this is also where technology enters

SandraS: much of what I've read talks about how technology can offer authentic learning experiences, authentic audiences

SandraS: so publishing student writing on the web and offering interactive features such as email response

SandraS: or using some of the technology pen pal systems

SandraS: there's a great math website

SandraS: <http://www.exploremath.com>

SandraS: I hope that's it

NeilMH: We have something similar here at the UofO called blackboard, where student projects are posted and comments are linked to the posting.

SandraS: right, Blackboard and other web-course packages usually offer some kind of discussion board

SandraS: one of the examples on exploremath.com is what happens to a curve when you change the graph's coordinates

SandraS: so the program allows you to change coordinates and the graphed curve immediately changes

SandraS: although that's not an authentic audience!

SandraS: it still uses technology to show the learner the immediate visual effect

SandraS: or if a student wanted to design a rollercoaster

SandraS: that may never happen

SandraS: but there's a program where a student can do that

SandraS: and can see how height and speed and curve will affect the design

SandraS: we're about at the end of the hour

NeilMH: Interesting web site. Thanks for the tip!

SandraS: any last comments? questions?

SandraS: thanks, Neil

HeatherRH: No questions, thanks for the interesting topics discussed :-)

SandraS: thanks for your input also.

BJ: Thanks, Sandy. I'm going to have to work on my writing assignments this year.

SandraS nods in agreement....

SandraS: that's exactly what I'm doing right now...

NeilMH . o O ( writing and mathematics, interesting )

SandraS: Neil, I noticed you have a link to NCTM on your personal info

SandraS: I know they've got a LOT of information

SandraS: and also curriculum projects centered around writing

SandraS: you might want to also check out a National Writing Project site near you

SandraS: the national website is

BJ: Neil, there was a discussion at the SSForum yesterday on baseball...they discussed several sites on baseball/math

SandraS: <http://www.writingproject.org>

SandraS: great stuff

SandraS: baseball is natural math stuff

BJ: the next AAMU writing project discussion is September 11

SandraS: we'll talk about Reading Each Other's Writing

SandraS: how to improve our own writing in writing groups/peer reviews

SandraS: Thanks, everyone. Hope everyone has a good evening.

BJ waves goodnight

SandraS: I'm going to go check my son's homework!

HeatherRH: Bye !

NeilMH: Bye!