

Title of Session: AAMU Writing Project - WriteTalk

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JeffC: I did want to let you know that I've written an article for NWREL (NorthWest Regional Education Lab) that should be published within the next couple of weeks. I'd like to share it with you... but didn't know if you wanted me to upload it here... or elsewhere, or send it to you Sandra.

SandraS: wonderful

SandraS: that sounds great Jeff

SandraS: BJ, do you want to begin with introductions?

SandraS: or do you want me to start?

BjB: Let's start with intros, Sandy

BjB: I'm an art teacher in Pennsylvania

SandraS: I'm an English teacher in Alabama

SandraS: Doris, would you like to introduce yourself?

JeffC: Laid off in Oregon

SandraS: all right!

SandraS: sounds like a possible movie title

JeffC: kinda like sleepless in Seattle

SandraS: OK, BJ and Jeff both know my spiel about the AAMU Writing Project

SandraS: But I'll give a 2-sentence rundown in case Doris is interested

SandraS: National Writing Project is a faculty development project that is federally and state funded

SandraS: and has run since 1973, currently with 175 sites around the nation

SandraS: all sites are at college campuses but the primary participants are k-12 teachers

SandraS: the idea is that teachers who focus on improving their own writing are better teachers of writing

SandraS: and that writing is a way of learning any subject

SandraS: that's it in a nutshell

SandraS: we're here at WriteTalk to talk about our own writing challenges and about writing pedagogy

SandraS: ok, so maybe we could start with an announcement

SandraS: Jeff just mentioned that he has an article getting published

SandraS: so it's nice to celebrate our milestones

SandraS: Jeff, would you like to tell us what the article is and a bit about your challenges in writing it?

SandraS: What I'd like to do this evening is simply to check in with everybody and see what we're all working on.

SandraS: Are you here for WriteTalk?

DorisM: Writing, that's something that scares me a lot.

BjB: I'm finding my biggest obstacle to writing is lack of time.

SandraS: ok, so we've got two powerful statements

SandraS: fear of writing

SandraS: lack of time

SandraS: where shall we start?

SandraS: let's take on both things

DorisM: I put together a newsletter with articles from the net.

SandraS: very cool

SandraS: so you do regular consistent writing

SandraS: that is immediately published

DorisM: and give it to my fellow teachers at the university

SandraS: what is the focus of the newsletter?

DorisM: new technologies and efl teaching

SandraS: wonderful

SandraS: what do you mean when you talk about fear of writing?

DorisM: We don't write in Venezuela, very few teachers do so.

SandraS: what about writing in the classroom?

DorisM: we don't know how. We have to manage the language. English is our second language. And Venezuela's school system doesn't teach you how to.

SandraS: ok, so there's not much writing in Spanish, either?

DorisM: we have students write short compositions and we basically check for grammar mistakes

SandraS: ah, yes.

SandraS: you may want to look at the National Writing Project website

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

SandraS: you can see some of the publications

SandraS: but one of the basic beliefs is that writing allows us all to learn better

SandraS: that's why the National Council of Mathematics Teachers have a writing curriculum

SandraS: math has been very progressive in incorporating writing into the classroom

SandraS: the focus then shifts from product to process

DorisM: Right now I'm starting a on-line community with my students at yahoo groups. They are supposed to write their homework there.

SandraS: that's great

SandraS: that's the wonderful thing about online writing

SandraS: so much easier to share the writing and to comment on it

SandraS: that's where weblogs can also come in

SandraS: I find that talking about writing is just as important as doing the writing

DorisM: Yes, we are all learning together

SandraS: so much of writing is about thinking

SandraS: Doris, maybe you can help us with this problem of not enough time that BJ mentioned

SandraS: since you put together a newsletter, how do you ensure you have the time to do the writing?

DorisM: Yes, but in Venezuela we're more oral and physical people.

SandraS: well, I think writing in the classroom can be connected to both the oral and the physical

SandraS: that is, writers who read their works in class usually get immediate feedback

DorisM: We don't write. I don't write I just published what other people have written. Well, I've tried with some teaching ideas but I'm not very good at writing

SandraS: I think most of us have been taught to believe that we're not good at writing

BjB: if you are good at dialogue and actions, why don't you work on plays or scripts?

SandraS: excellent idea, BJ

BjB: . o O (start with a format that you're familiar with)

BjB: that is a great way to also teach language

SandraS: absolutely, I agree, BJ

SandraS: Doris, are you wanting to write more?

DorisM: That's a good idea. Now that we have the community and we're using chat sessions, both my students and I are going to improve

BjB: have your students write how to take a bus in a strange city...or give directions on how to make something

SandraS: Writing in an ESL classroom is something I haven't pursued a great deal.

SandraS: I know when I taught German that the writing component accompanied the reading component closely

DorisM: Yes, I've been assigning little tasks that summarize what we learned in each lesson. They're supposed to write short compositions and talk about them the next session

SandraS: That sounds excellent, Diane

DorisM: we start from day one and you can see their progress at the end of the semester

SandraS: one thing I enjoy doing is asking students to write a class journal

SandraS: that is, a couple students are assigned to take notes on the class

SandraS: they write up a journal entry and read it to the class next period

DorisM: How can you do that when they can't do that in Spanish

SandraS: when I assign several students, it's great to see the different perspectives and styles

SandraS: it's a great way to review what we've done in class and to practice writing in a fairly non-threatening way

SandraS: it sounds like your class summaries are a similar assignment?

DorisM: That could work. I have mixed classes so I can have my more proficient students do that

SandraS: this is actually something that I learned from the Writing Project

SandraS: during the summer institute, we all presented journals on each day's happening

DorisM: I think this is going to be a great group for me

SandraS: we ended up with some friendly competition on writing as well as we could

SandraS: I'm glad you're here today, Doris

SandraS: Anyone is welcome to post writing to our office

SandraS: any kind of feedback you want on any stage of writing

SandraS: that's what we try to do here

SandraS: BJ, did you want to elaborate a bit more on the problem of not enough time?

BjB: Doris, this group has a group room so you can communicate with the group between monthly discussions

BjB: I don't have trouble with time doing stuff like newsletters

DorisM: Cool! I'm still discovering wonderful things here

BjB: I have trouble with time to just let my mind be creative

SandraS: aha!!!!

SandraS: I know the feeling.

BjB: . o O (like you have to sketch all the time to be a good artist)

DorisM: yes, to be creative you need to warm up first and sometimes takes some time that we don't have

BjB: Doris, click on the SEARCH tab at the top of your screen

BjB: then click on groups

BjB: enter AAMU WRITING PROJECT and then press the find it button

BjB: that will get you to where you can join the group.

BjB: . o O (you don't have to go there now, but once you've joined, the group name will be in your favorite places drop down menu)

SandraS: once you join the group, you can post messages to the discussion

SandraS: I try to send out a meeting reminder right before our monthly meeting

BjB: you did a good job this month, Sandy

SandraS bows humbly

SandraS: ok, journal writing

SandraS: this is one way to do daily writing exercise

SandraS: by that I mean, just sitting down and writing whatever comes up

SandraS: I feel out of sorts if I skip too many days

BjB nods sadly...I need to get back into the habit of doing that

SandraS: it's amazing, really amazing, what I can write in just 5 minutes

SandraS: the time writing practice that I use for free writing in class usually runs for 5 minutes

SandraS: so when I feel overwhelmed by no time, if I actually let myself sit for 5 minutes and write, I feel much more freed up

BjB: . o O (aerobics for the brain)

DorisM: I guess writing must be like math, if you exercise you'll get better and faster. I have to remember that and start exercising

SandraS: absolutely

SandraS: another way I try to stay in shape is through a writing group

SandraS: we meet the first Sunday for two hours

DorisM: With your help I know one day I'll be able to do it

SandraS: one person is responsible for bringing prompts

SandraS: we just write together and then read what we've written

SandraS: I like being able to write with other people

SandraS: why don't we try a quick collective free write?

SandraS: BJ and Doris, are you up for doing that?

DorisM: Oh, my!

BjB: on any particular topic?

SandraS: yes

SandraS: I've never done this before

SandraS: so let's experiment

DorisM: teacher, please! That's too difficult.

SandraS: I mean online

DorisM: Cool!

SandraS: ah, Doris, I know you can do it!!!!

BjB hugs Doris. We're all cheering for you

SandraS: let's take the topic "green"
DorisM: Ok I'll try!
SandraS: someone type a line
SandraS: any line
SandraS: don't worry about grammar
SandraS: spelling
SandraS: punctuation
SandraS: that's one of the guidelines for writing practice
DorisM: Green is the color of hope
DorisM: I love green
SandraS: hopping green frogs
SandraS: hope I can hop like a green frog
BjB: green buds bursting from branches
SandraS: green smells like something new
DorisM: I'm a level one student. I'm green.
SandraS: green sunset?
SandraS: green ocean
DorisM: green valley
BjB: a green student is filled with possibilities...just like the green shoots of spring
SandraS: I will try to green every day
SandraS: if green is a verb
BjB: I once saw a green sky when there were tornadoes in the area
SandraS: I like to sing in a green key
SandraS: ok, now I'm being silly
SandraS: That was fun!!!!
BjB: laughs...your singing is full of possibilities?
DorisM: yes, that was fun!
SandraS: yes, or maybe I can only sing Irish songs....
BjB: oh, good one
SandraS: I'm beginning to think it might be cool to experiment with online collective writing
DorisM: or Martians songs
SandraS: all right, Doris!
SandraS: hadn't thought of Martians
SandraS: I like that
SandraS: i don't know if y'all noticed, but we were all flexing our creative writing muscles
BjB: or singing on a green cheese moon
SandraS: oohhhh.....
SandraS: lovely
DorisM: yes, it feels good
DorisM: I wish I had more time to do things like this in my class
SandraS: I got this timed writing practice from Natalie Goldberg
SandraS: her books
SandraS: Writing Down the Bones
BjB: I think my biggest problem is that I don't have time to play

SandraS: Wild Mind

SandraS: yes, BJ

SandraS: not enough time to play

DorisM: we're super women

SandraS: yup

SandraS: super stressed!!!

DorisM: families, students, new technologies

BjB nods

SandraS: I find that if I slow down in the morning

SandraS: and write in my journal

SandraS: I feel more balanced

SandraS: there's always a cost

SandraS: maybe I don't finish grading papers

DorisM: where are you?

SandraS: I don't get everything done I need to get done

SandraS: I'm in Alabama USA

DorisM: Alabama, Forrest Gump's land

SandraS: still haven't seen that movie!

DorisM: I love Forrest

DorisM: Oh, come on!

SandraS: seriously

SandraS: I'm culturally challenged

DorisM: It's great. It's my favorite

SandraS: BJ, in terms of Tapped In technology

SandraS: I'm trying to think how I could facilitate a free writing practice online

DorisM: Why? it's so funny you haven't seen Forrest Gump yet. I can't believe it.

SandraS: if I gave a prompt and everyone wrote for 5 minutes

SandraS: then displayed the writing

SandraS: then we each read

SandraS: I don't know if the pasteboard would work

SandraS: I like the collective line-by-line writing, too

BjB: Sandy, you could put the topics on the whiteboard

SandraS: just trying to think of possibilities

SandraS: ah, good idea

SandraS: one of my favorite writing prompts is this: write about something you were afraid to do but did anyway

GraceGst4 joined the room.

BjB: people could also write on the whiteboard...or use a word processing program and then copy and paste

BjB: Hi, Grace. Welcome

SandraS: yes, that would work

BjB: I'm painfully shy, believe it or not!

GraceGst4: hi, thanks

SandraS: Hi, Grace.

SandraS: BJ, do you mean you're shy about showing your writing?

BJB: no, I'm shy about meeting new people, speaking to a group, all the stuff I do all the time in TI

SandraS: wow!

SandraS: I love cyberspace, eh?

SandraS: so here's another idea

SandraS: in order to support each other's creativity

SandraS: what if I put up several prompts in the AAMU Writing Project office

SandraS: we could each commit to choosing one prompt a week and writing for 5 minutes

SandraS: using the guidelines for timed writing practice

BJB: that sounds doable

SandraS: I believe that file is also in the office

SandraS: then we could share our writing at the next meeting

DorisM: what are the guidelines?

SandraS: share our experiences

SandraS: ok, there are 7 guidelines

SandraS: the file is called wrtpract.doc

SandraS: I know it's in my office

SandraS: pretty sure it's in the AAMU Writing Project office

BJB: is it featured in the group room, Sandy?

SandraS: if it isn't, I'll upload it there

SandraS: not sure BJ

SandraS: but you can find it on my profile

SandraS: Doris, if you highlight my name under the Here tab to the left

SandraS: then click on the green information icon

SandraS: you'll see my profile

SandraS: if you scroll down to "Shared Files"

SandraS: you'll see wrtpract.doc

DorisM: I'm looking at your picture. nice to meet you!

SandraS: those are the guidelines for the timed writing practice

SandraS: thanks, Doris

SandraS: simply follow those guidelines when you decide to write for 5 minutes

SandraS: or 10

SandraS: I can vouch for these guidelines

SandraS: I've been using them for a long time in my own writing and in the classroom

SandraS: OK, we're about out of time.

SandraS: I'll make sure I post the prompts by tomorrow morning.

SandraS: I'll look forward to talking again next month about what we experienced.

DorisM: I've got the file. When do we start with this little project

SandraS: Thank you so much for coming to WriteTalk, Doris, and for sharing your ideas.

SandraS: Thanks, too, BJ, for your wonderful facilitation and input.

BJB: thank you, Sandy

DorisM: Thanks to you teachers.

SandraS: ok, take care everyone.

DorisM: you, too! Nice meeting you both!

SandraS waves bye

BjB waves goodnight

DorisM: how do you do that? waves

SandraS: Doris,

SandraS: just type a colon

SandraS: and then the action you want to perform

SandraS nods her head

BjB: Doris, type :waves

DorisM waves

SandraS: yeah!!!!

BjB cheers...bravo

DorisM: Ok! got it, thanks

SandraS jumps on hoverboard and flashes peace sign

SandraS left the room.

BjB chuckles and heads to bed

DorisM peace

BjB left the room (signed off).