Title of Session: WriteTalk - Sharing Best Practices in Writing
Moderator: Sandra Shattuck
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Room: WriteTalk Group

BJB2: Welcome to tonight's WriteTalk discussion

BJB2: before we begin, a reminder to go to the Actions menu in the top right of your chat window and click on DETACH

BJB2: we usually start all the Tapped In discussions with introductions. Please tell Sandy where you are located and what brings you to the discussion

SandraS: I'm in Alabama, teach literature & writing, and I'm here because I love to talk about writing...

HeatherBu: I'm a Tech teacher in Texas (don't you just love the alliteration?). I'm always looking for new ways to inspire my students to write more.

BJB2: I'm an art teacher in Pennsylvania

SusanAM: Hi. I am located in NJ and tutoring spec ed students in LA and Math. I am taking an Ed Tech Masters class and learning about MUVE's

BettySz: I'm in New Jersey. I teach second and third grade basic skills reading and writing. I am taking the same course as Susan.

SandraS: great!

SandraS: Jeff and David?

DavidWe: I'm usually in New Jersey (tonight in Bucks County, PA). I'm one of the HelpDesk volunteers (along with Jeff and Bj and Heather) and I lead a math education and technology discussion

SusanAM: Writing is one of the greatest challenges that my kids face, always looking for new ideas

SandraS: you're in the right place Susan...

SandraS: I usually start with an intro. to the National Writing Project

BettySz: It is hard to get my third graders motivated to write, especially the boys.

SandraS: and apologies to those of you who have heard it before

SandraS: I hear you, Betty.

DavidWe: boys are challenged (speaking as one) to express themselves at that age, I believe

SandraS: Well, have I got a program for you....

SandraS: I'll take about 5 minutes to tell you about it

DavidWe wonders if he will FINALLY be able to complete those OVERDUE assignments from 3rd grade

SandraS: then we'll get right to your concerns

SandraS: LOL, David

SandraS: The National Writing Project (NWP) has been around over 30 years

SandraS: founded in Berkeley by Jim Gray, who died last year

SandraS: fantastic professional development organization with three basic tenets

SandraS: 1) teachers are the best teachers of other teachers

SandraS: 2) teachers teach writing more effectively if they improve their own writing

SandraS: 3) writing can be used as a way to learn in all subject areas, all grade levels

SandraS: NWP is nationally funded with a budget of almost 30 million dollars

SandraS: that budget needs to get approved every year

SandraS: NWP folks go to Washington and lobby

SandraS: There are about 190 sites all located at colleges/universities

SandraS: often in education schools/depts of English

SandraS: the central program for each site is the Summer Invitational Institute

SandraS: which we're doing right now at our site

SandraS: Let's take a look at the website for a bit, then come on back here

SandraS: If you're interested in participating in a summer institute, click on the map and find the site closest to you...

SandraS: http://www.writingproject.org

SandraS: ok, who's back?

HeatherBu: Here

SusanAM: added it to my favorites to peruse later

BettySz: I am

SandraS: ok...

SandraS: one thing to check out later is the publication part of the site

SandraS: if you click on publications, you can then search

SandraS: so if you wanted to find an article in The Quarterly (a fantastic resource) on journaling, you could just enter "journals" and click on the Quarterly button, and you'll get some good stuff

SusanAM: do you have to join to get stuff

SandraS: Anyway, let me tell you a little bit about what's going on at our site, just so you get a flavor of the summer institute..

SandraS: no, you don't Susan

SandraS: You can order any of the publications, and The Quarterly is pretty much all online

BJB2: they also have a good e-newsletter

SandraS: it's taking a break right now to move completely to an online journal

SusanAM: Betty, it could be a good new source for our various papers and our thesis

SandraS: yes, the Voice is excellent

SandraS: I agree, Susan

BettySz: It sounds great.

SandraS: ok, so in our institute right now, we've got 14 teachers from k-university sitting in a conference room

SandraS: we start each day with Writing into the Day

SandraS: we've got a prompt, or you can write about the journal entry you've just heard...we take turns recording/writing what happens each day and then reading it the next day

SandraS: we have a teacher demonstration using writing in the classroom

SandraS: we get into response groups and discuss the demo and write a letter to the teacher

SandraS: the teacher writes a self-reflective piece

SandraS: somewhere in there we eat lunch

SandraS: today, we went into the lab and played with the E-Anthology

SandraS: which is almost indescribably

SandraS: wonderful

BettySz: What is the E-Anthology?

SandraS: it's an interface that gets set up each summer for all the participants in the summer institutes

SandraS: it takes a while to explain, Betty, and I'm doing that now...so bear with me...

SandraS: imagine 190 sites with about 15 teachers at each site

SandraS: they are all able to sign into the E-Anthology online

SandraS: and post their own work

SandraS: and comment on others' works

SandraS: there are different sections to the E-anthology

SandraS: there's the Guestbook, where everybody can just sign in

SandraS: There's A Day in the Life, where folks post about what's happening at their summer institute

SandraS: there's Classroom Matters where folks write about pedagogy

SandraS: and the most popular part is Open Mic where you can post poetry, fiction, non-fiction

SandraS: the best part is getting feedback and getting it

SandraS: one teacher today said she'd become an E-Anthology addict

SandraS: you can see the E-Anthology from last summer

SandraS: if you go to the NWP site and click on National Programs

SandraS: you'll see a link for the E-Anthology and somewhere there's a link to 2005

SandraS: so the anthologies are archived

SandraS: Then we have a discussion based on an article. Then we write out of the day.

SandraS: Tomorrow we get to see what the Technology Institute has been doing all week...

SandraS: which is building digital stories.

SandraS: OK, I'm done...any questions about NWP before we move on?

SusanAM: ok so the thought is that by writing , writing, writing, each person's writing will get better.

SandraS: absolutely....but there's also feedback...

SandraS: I forgot to say that every day all participants meet in response groups

SusanAM: is the feedback just within your own group?

SandraS: usually, but you can ask others, and you can post on E-Anthology

SusanAM: in the Open Mic?

SandraS: someone in Alaska might respond really well to a poem by someone in W. Virginia

SandraS: yeah, any of the relevant sections in the E-Anthology

SusanAM: no more questions

SandraS: one of the unexpected benefits is realizing there are so many dedicated, creative teachers across the country

SandraS: and that's part of what NWP tries to do...get teachers voices heard

SandraS: ok, so we've got some writing concerns y'all have already mentioned

SandraS: let's go with those

SandraS: Betty mentioned trying to get 3rd (?) grade boys to write

MelissaB joined the room.

SandraS waves to Melissa

SandraS: Melissa, we're starting to talk about writing challenges in the classroom

SusanAM: And I have kids who just sit and sit and can't get an idea even with a prompt

SandraS: would you like to tell us where and what you teach, and what brought you to WriteTalk?

SandraS: (we did introductions at the start...)

SandraS: ok, sounds like some overlap...how do we inspire kids to write?

SandraS: anybody have any success stories to share?

SusanAM: I did a newspaper in my resource room, with photos etc. The kids liked that

HeatherBu: I've found that some students are able to write more easily by writing directly on the computer.

BJB2 knows Susan has one

MelissaB: I am current working on my Master's of Education. I'm taking a course now called Literacy and Language across the Curriculum...I thought this discussion would be interesting.

SandraS: welcome, Melissa~

SandraS: ok, so using computer & doing a newspaper...Susan, why do you think kids responded to the newspaper project?

SusanAM: it was personal to the school and to them and we were publishing it for their classmates. also I added puzzles and games with their works

SandraS: excellent...so you incorporated so core requirements for writing to succeed...

SandraS: the topic, and often the form, must be meaningful to writer

SandraS: also, authentic publication is very helpful

SandraS: the writers knew that their peers would read their writing

SandraS: very different audience than the teachers, who grades the writing...

BettySz: Writing about personal experiences usually helps, too.

SandraS: so the kids are also writing about a topic they know

SusanAM: yes. they didn't really think about grades at all.

SandraS: yes, Betty, any topic that the writer knows...

SandraS: did you plan it that way, Susan?

SusanAM: you mean the grading?

SandraS: right, no grading, real publication..

SusanAM: I did grade although we never discussed the grades.....and I definitely planned the publication

SandraS: ok, here's another example of authentic audience, but with teachers as writers..

SandraS: all the teachers in our tech institute signed up to compose a digital story this week

SandraS: but they also knew that at the end of the week, tomorrow, they would be presenting their writing to other teachers...the ones in the Summer Institute

SandraS: so even though the story might be personal, the audience is still right there...

SandraS: the digital story writers know they'll have other teachers looking at their compositions

SandraS: to see how to use the technology/writing in their classes

SandraS: that kind of real audience makes the writing more real...if I can use those words...

SandraS: does anybody have any experience constructing writing with authentic audiences? publication?

SusanAM: not personally

BettySz: No, not really

BJB2: I've done a digital story during a National Gallery of Art Institute

HeatherBu . o O (7th grade students writing open letters to the soon-to-be 6th graders, offering advice on how to survive middle school)

SandraS: ooh, cool Heather...and BJ...

SandraS: can we hear from you both? BJ, could you tell us a bit about your experience..

SandraS: and what made the writing work for you?

BJB2: the writing was a real struggle for me...

BJB2: first to get an idea/topic

BJB2: and then to boil it down to just one typed page double spaced

SandraS: did working with images & sound make writing easier, harder, different?

BJB2: it helped me to use only the most necessary words

BJB2: I didn't know whether to start with images or writing...

SandraS: so here's another idea for instigating writing...use music, images, movement....

BJB2: and found that I had to compromise and use both

SandraS: that's a real skill, BJ

BJB2: the pictures illustrate the words

BJB2: and the words add meaning to the images

BJB2: the sound ties it all together

SandraS: nicely put, BJ...

SandraS: we had a teacher demo yesterday

HeatherBu: BJ, do you have this online someplace, where we could see/hear it?

SandraS: from a 10th grade language arts teacher

SandraS listens to BJ's response

BJB2: no, I don't, Heather. I think I have the text here in this group room though

SandraS . o O (under files)

HeatherBu: thanks

SusanAM: what does "o O" mean?

BJB2: those are thought bubbles like in a cartoon

BJB2: to think start the line with /th followed by a thought

BJB2 . o O (it's a nice way to vary the text and keep it interesting)

MelissaB . o O (interesting)

SusanAM . o O (is this thinking)

SandraS applauds Melissa's quick learning

SandraS: Yeah, Susan!

SandraS: ok, if Heather's willing, let's hear about her authentic audience writing project...

SandraS: would you like to tell us about it?

HeatherBu: This year's 7th grade students

HeatherBu: used their new word processing skills to write open letters to this year's 5th grade students.

HeatherBu: They used peer-editing, knowing that their work was going to be read by "little kids"

HeatherBu: their writing levels were much better than on most of their wp assignments,

HeatherBu: and they have a sense of ownership and pride...

SandraS: and purpose

HeatherBu: now, when the new year starts in the fall, they will be the big 8th graders,

HeatherBu: watching out for the new 6th graders whom they have already helped mentor.

SandraS: so there's a clear social component to the writing

HeatherBu: yes

BettySz . o O (Maybe I could have my third graders write stories for the kindergarteners using photostory.)

SandraS: oh, YEAH

HeatherBu: The 5th grade teachers were delighted, and we are planning on making it a two-way project next year.

SandraS: see that's even cooler

SandraS: making it two-way

MelissaB: what a fabulous idea!

SandraS: Betty, photostory is what the teachers are using this week in the tech institute

SusanAM: My kids did an "About Me" power point slide with a photo from google, that I put together for a slide show for parent/teacher conferences. They liked having something running during the conferences

HeatherBu nods

SandraS: right, and there's the technology hook...

HeatherBu: I've done that too, Susan, and the parents are always delighted.

SandraS: technology can often entice reluctant writers to write

HeatherBu nods vigorously

SandraS: a kindergarten teacher was thinking of using photostory for the same reason

SusanAM: we just learned how to use photostory on our ed tech class. Most of the kids do not have it in our district yet

SandraS: students will put their stories together and have them running during parents' night

BettySz: Susan and I are just learning to use photostory this week in our special projects course. We have to do a sample project for next week. It seems fairly easy for young students to use.

SandraS: yes, it does...

SandraS: it's nice that it's free...

SandraS: which should make it easier for kids in your district to get it Susan

SandraS: unless there are other restrictions

BettySz: Does it only work on PC's? Do Mac's have a similar program?

BJB2: macs have iMovie

SandraS: it's only with windows

SandraS: only with XP

SandraS: BJ, you've used iMovie, right?

BJB2: right

SusanAM: can you download iMovie and is it free and easy?

BJB2: yes, Susan

BJB2 . o O (I used it...how hard can it be?   )

SusanAM smiles

SandraS: I think iMovie has a little steeper learning curve than photostory?

BettySz: I will have to look into it, because most of our computers are macs.

SandraS: they should come loaded with iMovie

SandraS: especially if they're running on OS 10.4

BJB2 agrees

BettySz: Some of our computers need to be updated. Some are OS 10 but others aren't

SandraS: we're just about out of time...but we've moved into the arena of picture, image, sound, movement relationship to writing

SandraS . o O (I think iMovie is on earlier OS versions???)

HeatherBu: Sandra, you mentioned a "technology institute" where they are working on "digital stories"...can you tell me a little more or where I can find more info on in?

SusanAM: any ideas about movement, or do you mean movies?

SandraS: The technology institute is a project through our writing project site.

SandraS: there's a huge amount of time and money devoted to looking at technology and writing in the NWP

SandraS: so there's a tech liaison at each site

SandraS: I co-facilitate a writing and technology writing retreat in Nebraska

SandraS: teachers who use technology to teach writing come and write about their practice

HeatherBu: Great. Thanks

SandraS: if you attend a Summer Invitational Institute, you can participate in any NWP event

SandraS: like the writing and tech retreat..

SandraS:Heather, I can email you some more info....

SandraS: ok, we're about done

SandraS: thanks to everyone for some great conversation.

HeatherBu . o O (Yes, please, Sandra)

SusanAM: Thanks to all

SusanAM Smiles

HeatherBu: thank you, Sandra

SandraS: Have a great evening! in writing solidarity!

BettySz: Thanks for some interesting ideas.

HeatherBu cheers

MelissaB: bye

SandraS whooshes off on her hoverboard....

HeatherBu grins