

Title of Session: WriteTalk - Teaching Journals and Reflective Writing

Moderator: Sandra Shattuck

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Room: After School Online

BJB2: Sandy, our discussion leader, should be here shortly

BJB2: before she arrives, let's cover some housekeeping tips

MichaelRu joined the room.

BJB2: to make it easier to read the chat go to the ACTIONS menu in the top right of the chat window and click on DETACH

BJB2: hi, Michael

MichaelRu: Hello

BJB2: if Sandy shares any urls, hold down the ctrl key on your keyboard when you click on the url.

BJB2: . o O (this will help with pop up blockers)

SandraS joined the room.

SandraS waves to all

BJB2: perfect timing, Sandy!

BJB2: reckon we can start, Sandy. Please introduce yourself and let us know where you are and what you teach

SandraS: I teach world lit. and comp. in Alabama

BJB2: I'm an art teacher in Pennsylvania

MichaelRu: I'm a technology integration teacher in NY

AndreaGst6: I am a second grade teacher in North Carolina

JaneTH joined the room.

SandraS: Hi, Jane

SandraS: We're just doing introductions.

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

EmilyW: I am a web designer and recent college grad (and I can't stay long for this session)

BJB2 wonders if Jane is shy?

SandraS: Jane is new to Tapped In

SandraS: brand new

JaneTH: I teach first grade

SandraS applauds Jane's Tapped In inauguration

BJB2: cool, Jane. You have something in common with Andrea

JaneTH: thank you!

SandraS: ok, thanks for the intros....

SandraS: nice to see Michael and Emily again!

SandraS: usually, I start with a brief spiel about the National Writing Project

SandraS: and then we get to it

SandraS: the National Writing Project (NWP)

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

SandraS: is a professional development organization that started about 30 years ago at Berkeley

SandraS: it now has about 190 sites located at colleges that serve primarily k-12 teachers

SandraS: there are 3 tenets behind the NWP

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 is a great learning tool for all subject areas

SandraS: the core project of each WP site is the summer institute

SandraS: we just started ours and Jane is one of our participants -- we call her a Teaching Fellow

SandraS: when she's done at the end of the month, she'll be a Teacher Consultant

SandraS: Jane, I'm going to put you on the spot....do you want to say anything about your experience so far?

JaneTH: I am very excited to be a part of the Writing Project. I am enjoying it very much!

SandraS: o O (Jane has to say that cuz I'm partly responsible for facilitating.....)

SandraS: Thanks, Jane!

EmilyW: What exactly is a teaching fellow?

SandraS: Emily, that's just the name the NWP gives teachers who first participate in a Summer Institute

SandraS: once a teacher participates in a Summer Institute

EmilyW: oh ok

SandraS: s/he becomes a Teacher Consultant (TC) and can participate in any NWP project

SandraS: Like the writing retreats

SandraS: national conference

SandraS: things like that

JaneTH: The Institute is so different from what I expected.

SandraS: if you're at all interested, you can go to the website

SandraS: and locate a project near you

SandraS: ok, any questions about NWP before we go on?

SandraS: ooh, how so, Jane?

JaneTH: It is relaxed and fun. I have learned so much!

BJB2: can any teacher participate in a writing project?

SandraS loves to hear that!

SandraS: yes, BJ

SandraS: you just have to apply to a site near you

EmilyW: do you have to be a teacher to participate?

SandraS: we've got a couple folks who work with learning disabled, gifted, science, math, language arts

SandraS: yes, Emily

SandraS: I think you can be pre-service, but I'm not sure

SandraS: the summer institutes works best for people who have at least 1 or 2 years of teaching

SandraS: ok, everybody ready to talk about reflective writing???

JaneTH: yes

AndreaGst6: ready

SandraS: Michael, this will be a repeat question for you, but I think it's a good one to start with.

SandraS: What kind of reflection about your teaching do you already engage in....written or otherwise?

SandraS: for instance, right now I have the great opportunity of talking with other teachers in the Summer Institute

SandraS: I also write in my blog while I'm teaching

SandraS: I write for a teaching portfolio for my annual review

SandraS: anybody else either write or talk about your teaching practice?

JaneTH: Everyone who does PEPE should reflect on their teaching

SandraS wonders if her mic is on....

SandraS: can you explain PEPE, Jane

EmilyW: what is the address of your blog?

JaneTH: PEPE is the Alabama Teacher Evaluation program

SandraS: I'll show you in a sec, Emily....we're going to look at some selections from those blogs

MichaelRu: I'm just starting my annual review, so that would be a formal piece

SandraS: and you've done those before, Michael?

MichaelRu: ...which was due 2 weeks ago

SandraS: LOL

SandraS: do you have a draft of it Michael?

MichaelRu: yes - we have a 3 year cycle of review

MichaelRu: ask me about the draft tomorrow afternoon...

SandraS: if you felt comfortable, this would be a good place to post your draft...or parts of it...and we can comment

SandraS: we tend to think this type of writing needs to be done in isolation, but maybe not so much

SandraS: ok, Michael...but really, if you want another pair of eyes, send it on to me...

SandraS: ok, so we all have formal, institutional requirements to reflect on our teaching practice

SandraS: and philosophy

SandraS: why should we write informally (as in a teaching journal) if we're already busy writing for institutional blessings?

SandraS: any thoughts?

JaneTH: writing about your teaching helps you evaluate how you are doing. It give you a chance to reflect on how you did and what you could do better.

SandraS: I agree, Jane

AndreaGst6: I think teaching journals are a different type of writing. More for you own growth.

SandraS: I'm going to paste a quotation in here...please let me know what you think.

SandraS: When we go about the spontaneous, intuitive performance of the actions of everyday life, we show ourselves to be knowledgeable in a special way. Often we cannot say what it is that we know. When we try to describe it we find ourselves at a loss, or we produce descriptions that are obviously inappropriate. Our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing. [Donald Schoen, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, quoted in "Why Teachers Should Also Write," Kate Kiefer, *Academic Exchange Quarterly* Summer 2003: v 7 issue 2

SandraS: <http://www.rapidintellect.com/AEQweb/choice.htm>

SandraS: We've been doing teacher demonstrations in our institute

SandraS: and we do group evaluations afterwards

SandraS: in my group, everyone was saying that the two teachers doing a demonstration kept their interest the whole time

SandraS: I asked them, "How?"

SandraS: and one person in the group said, "I can't explain it. I just know they did."

SandraS: So I think the quote above is talking about that...that we can get into routines, we know what we're doing in the classroom, but we don't necessarily know how to articulate exactly what we do.

SandraS: Here's another quick quote from that article:

SandraS: In particular, reflection can be triggered by surprise, that is, by a situation or an experience that jars us into realizing that we are acting in usual or scripted ways. ...In effect, reflective writing can help teachers understand why students might not interpret lecture material as clearly as the teacher believes they should be able to or why a particular assignment failed in its goal. - Kiefer

SandraS: does anything in those quotations spark any thoughts for you?

SandraS: does any of it resonate in any way?

JaneTH: I think that they are true statements.

MichaelRu: It's easy to get caught up in the day to day of teaching - and not know (or remember) how you got to where you are

SandraS: I agree with both of you...

SandraS: I also like the idea of surprise...that reflective writing can surprise you out of usual ways of teaching, on some level

JaneTH: True

SandraS: so here's an idea...wouldn't it be cool if teachers got paid for 1/2 an hour of writing about their practice every other day...or something like that?

JaneTH: It's a great idea.

JaneTH: It won't happen.

SandraS: or every time teachers experienced an inservice....reflection afterwards

SandraS agrees with Jane

SandraS: unless we have an educational revolution!

SandraS: ok, so let's move on to the next section

AndreaGst6: That would be great. I think teachers would love the opportunity to write but the time is just not there

SandraS: I agree, Andrea

SandraS: That's why the Summer Institute at the writing projects can be so valuable

SandraS: lots of time to write

SandraS: and the writing retreats also help a lot

SandraS: teachers LOVE getting away to write for a weekend

SandraS: I've selected a few entries from my different blogs

SandraS: if y'all are ok with this, I'll put these up for you to read

JaneTH: ok

SandraS: I've chosen entries in which I've talked about my teaching, the class

SandraS: here's the thing....

SandraS: when I blog with my students, I tend to naturally talk about how class is going

SandraS: I think the medium of blogging elicits this

SandraS: I will talk about class process in class

SandraS: how I formulate assignments

SandraS: that kind of thing

SandraS: but blogging elicits more detail, and I feel more vulnerable

SandraS: let's see what you think...

SandraS: here's the first entry

SandraS: <http://sdshattuck.blogspot.com/2005/01/welcome-to-blogging.html#comments>

SandraS: go ahead and look at it and then come back

SandraS: Jane, if you click on the link, another window should open

SandraS: to get back here, just close the window, and put your cursor in the chat box to resume typing

SandraS: did holding down the control key get you to the site, Jane?

JaneTH: I will let you finish your discussion and go ask Tom. He is downstairs working. Thank you for letting me join in. I look forward to next time.

SandraS: ok, any thoughts about that blog entry?

SandraS: did anything strike you?

SandraS: I'll describe it a bit for Jane

SandraS: it's the first entry in my world lit. class blog

SandraS: and I'm describing a class discussion

SandraS: I mention students' names and what they've said

SandraS: the comments by students afterwards range from comments that refer to my posting

SandraS: to totally irrelevant comments

SandraS: So although I'm not necessarily reflecting on my teaching, I'm reflecting on what happened in class.

MichaelRu: you can learn a lot about your students very quickly in this medium

DavidWe wonders how

SandraS: yes, I agree...how do you see that, Michael?

SandraS echoes David's question

MichaelRu: their personalities show through in their writing - how they greet you (what's up Dr. s?), etc.

DavidWe nods

DavidWe: Is it different than writing on paper?

SandraS: YES!

JaneTH: I agree writing is very emotional and personalities shine through

SandraS nods to Jane

SandraS: Michael, do you agree that blogging is quite different from paper?

MichaelRu: absolutely

DavidWe: why?

MichaelRu: it's more like written talking

SandraS: #1 - it's interactive in ways that paper can't be

DavidWe is being a Devil's advocate...

SandraS agrees with Michael

DavidWe wasn't going to correct Sandra's spelling

SandraS: different genre of writing

DavidWe nods

SandraS: I have a posting titled "questioning the teach"

SandraS: let's see if I can put up the link

SandraS: I'll summarize for you Jane

DavidWe: but in that it is different, can it be detrimental to "expository prose" if that's important to work on, too?

SandraS: <http://sdshattuck.blogspot.com/2004/09/questioning-teach.html>

SandraS: great question, David

DavidWe bows humbly

JaneTH: Wow! I got there!

SandraS: Cool!

DavidWe smiles

MichaelRu: woo-hoo!

SandraS: thanks for the "woo-hoo"...I think...ya wanna expand on it, Michael?

MichaelRu: woooooo-hooooooo

MichaelRu: sorry

SandraS: LOL

DavidWe: WOO-HOO!

SandraS: I know, you couldn't resist

JaneTH: My first graders always believe whatever I say. They never question what I say or ask them to do!

SandraS: is that developmentally appropriate, Jane?

JaneTH: yes

SandraS: so you don't need to talk about process so much...it's more important to just do things

SandraS: one last entry....

DavidWe listens attentively

SandraS: <http://sdshattuck.blogspot.com/2004/09/big-risk.html>

DavidWe has another question

SandraS listens to David

DavidWe: Should education be much more about "public performance" Blogs are available to the "public"

DavidWe asks

SandraS: ok, David, lemme try to tackle your two questions

SandraS: first of all, I think writing on blogs adds to expository writing skills

DavidWe: Don't mean to ask two too many questions

SandraS: mainly because writers know they've got an audience

SandraS: and the audience may simply be their peers in class

SandraS: so they're more conscious about what they say

DavidWe nods

SandraS: even if it's informal writing

SandraS: also, blogging helps students to find their voices

DavidWe: peer-review writing?

SandraS: and that helps with expository

SandraS: kinda....

SandraS: it has to do with the public nature you just referred to

SandraS: blogs provide more authentic audience

DavidWe: more so than writing on the school paper, literary magazine...?

SandraS: so writers are more accountable

DavidWe: authentic?

SandraS: oh, not necessarily

SandraS: school paper, literary magazine is a much different audience than the teacher

DavidWe agrees

SandraS: which is the audience student writers tend to write for...

DavidWe: but those ARE authentic audiences

SandraS: absolutely

SandraS: we only have about 2 minutes

DavidWe smiles and counts backward from 120

SandraS: anyone want to comment on my articulation of vulnerability?

SandraS: I keep dancing around this in my blogs

SandraS: what's appropriate to reflect on when my audience is primarily students?

SandraS: What would you feel comfortable reflecting on if your students were your readers?

SandraS: if your colleagues were your readers?

AndreaGst6: You need to decide on the purpose of your writing. If it is for you..

AndreaGst6: then you need it to be an honest account

SandraS: so reflective writing for your eyes only can be an effective means for transforming your teaching?

SandraS: thinking about your teaching?

SandraS: oops, we are out of time...

SandraS: thank you so much for coming tonight and offering your ideas...

SandraS: I learned a lot...

SandraS: I want to go write.....

AndreaGst6: thanks!

MichaelRu: thanks for sharing!

JaneTH: thank you for letting me join

SandraS: I'll see you next Monday, Jane!

SandraS: have a good weekend, everybody...

JaneTH: ok

SandraS jumps on hoverboard and whooshes off...