

**Title of Session:** WriteTalk - Sharing Best Practices in Writing

**Moderator:** Sandra Shattuck

**Title of File:** 20061109writetalk

**Date:** November 9, 2006

Room: WriteTalk Group

**BJB2:** let's do a couple tips while we wait for Sandra to get here...

**BJB2:** to ID a member of Tapped In, click one time on their name under the HERE tab and then click on the green i at the bottom

**BethBre:** Wow, we teach all day and then log on for more guidance after hours; are we gluttons or what?

**MelissaMJB:** I thought I'd try this out right away

**BJB2:** we're hungry for collegial collaboration, Beth

**AileenC:** Yes, not enough time at school...

**JesseB:** Why not? Melissa and I are new to Tapped In.

**MelissaMJB:** yes

**BJB2** agrees with Aileen

**BJB2:** welcome to the Tapped In Community, Jesse and Melissa

**MelissaMJB:** thanks!

**MelissaMJB:** Seems pretty cool

**AileenC:** Welcome Jesse and Melissa - Tapped In is awesome!

**JesseB:** So I've heard!

**BethBre:** This is such a great way to share ideas (and gather great ideas) from colleagues around the world!

**SandraS** joined the room.

**FredK** . o O ( good to see all you new educators )

**MelissaMJB:** Jesse and I just came from our ECMP class online

**SandraS** waves to all

**AileenC**: And it's ongoing - not just a session or two

**JesseB**: I'm not actually a teacher yet, so I don't know how much I'll be able to share, but I'm interested in learning

**SandraS** apologizes deeply for tardiness

**MelissaMJB**: Me too - I'm only in my Pre-internship year

**SandraS** hears new teacher voices...

**BJB2**: let's make this official...I'll announce and then we can do intros

**SandraS** nods

**BJB2**: Welcome to today's WriteTalk discussion.

**BJB2**: We usually start all the tapped in discussions with introductions.

**BJB2**: anything special you want people to say in their intro, Sandy?

**FredK**: I am a tutor for literacy with the Pushmataha County Literacy Council in SE Oklahoma looking for ways to enhance our program.

**BJB2** . o O ( place, what you teach or hope to teach )

**SandraS**: sounds good, BJ

**BethBre**: Hello everyone, I'm a technology teacher in Bethlehem, PA - that's in eastern PA

**BJB2**: thanks, Fred

**AileenC**: I am a special educator in Virginia

**MelissaMJB**: I think I'm still getting the hang of this!

**SandraS**: I teach literature and writing here in northern Alabama, college level

**MelissaMJB**: okay! Just making sure

**SandraS** claps for Melissa

**BJB2:** intro, Melissa?

**MelissaMJB:** lol I am After Degree Education student attending the University of Regina, in my pre-intern year

**BJB2:** if this is your first writetalk discussion, you're in for a treat!

**SandraS:** and Aileen?

**MelissaMJB:** yes it is!

**SandraS:** thanks, BJ!

**JesseB:** I am a future teacher of high school English from Melville, Saskatchewan, Canada. I am doing my internship after Christmas.

**AileenC:** special ed - high school

**SandraS:** great, that sounds like everybody

**SandraS:** nice to see you again, Fred

**FredK:** you too Sandra

**SandraS:** usually I start with an introduction to the National Writing Project (NWP) and then we get to it

**SandraS:** the National Writing Project has been around about 30 years

**SandraS:** it's a professional development program that is federally funded

**SandraS:** it has about 190 writing project sites across the nation

**SandraS:** even in the Virgin Islands

**SandraS:** and they're located at universities

**SandraS:** the sites serve mostly k-12 teachers

**SandraS:** the 3 main tenets of NWP are that teachers are the best teachers of other teachers

**SandraS:** no canned professional development or inservice

**SandraS:** that teachers teach writing better when they improve their own writing

**SandraS:** and that writing is a fantastic pedagogical tool across all subject areas

**SandraS:** the main project for each writing project site is the Summer Institute

**SandraS:** once you go through a Summer Institute (SI) you become a teacher consultant, or TC

**SandraS:** in NWP jargon...and you can participate in any NWP event

**SandraS:** national writing retreats, for instance.

**SandraS:** NWP also has a huge technology initiative

**SandraS:** any questions while I take a breath?

**BJB2** fans Sandy's smoking fingers

**AileenC:** more on the technology initiative?

**JesseB:** You held your breath while you wrote all that?

**SandraS** chuckles

**SandraS:** no, I needed a breath after I wrote that...

**SandraS:** ok, let's check out the website

**SandraS:** when you go there, you can click on the link to the map at the top of the screen and see if there's a writing project site near you

**SandraS:** summer institutes often give participants graduate credit or stipends

**SandraS:** we've got a vibrant project in Alaska, for all you northern-type folks!

**BethBre:** Sandra, what is the cost of attending the summer institute?

**SandraS:** no cost!

**BethBre:** If it's free it's for me!

**SandraS:** you usually get a stipend or graduate credit

**BethBre:** What's the URL for the website

**SandraS:** I hear, ya, Beth

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

**SandraS:** why don't y'all go check it out for about 3 minutes and then come on back here

**JesseB:** I guess the "Nation" is National Writing Project is the U.S., huh?

**BJB2:** Melissa, hold down the ctrl key when you click <http://www.writingproject.org/>

**SandraS:** yes, Jesse...we need a Canadian Writing Project

**JesseB:** Maybe someday soon, Sandra

**SandraS:** Yes!

**SandraS:** it's a model that could work many places

**SandraS:** very grassroots

**SandraS:** ok, is everybody back here?

**BethBre:** Yep, I'm with you

**JesseB:** Yes

**AileenC:** yes

**MelissaMJB:** yes

**SandraS:** Fred, you here?

**BJB2:** sorry...Fred and I are passing notes in class

**SandraS:** one of the great resources on the website is the 30 Ideas for Teaching Writing booklet under publications...you can see the ideas on the website and those ideas are also linked to longer articles in the Quarterly, which is the NWP's journal on writing

**FredK:** Sorry I was distracted

**SandraS:** funny you should mention passing notes....

**SandraS:** that was exactly what we were going to do!

**BJB2** listens

**SandraS:** ok, let's try this...then we can open up for discussion

**SandraS:** I love this classroom practice...it's based on passing notes in class

**SandraS:** and you're asking students to pass notes to each other...

**SandraS:** this is a way to get discussion going through writing

**FredK** uses texting

**SandraS:** so students pair up

**SandraS:** and one student writes a note to the other and passes it

**SandraS:** recipient reads note and responds in writing and passes back

**SandraS:** the teacher/facilitator just calls time

**SandraS:** and students switch notes

**SandraS:** here, we're going to try this with private messaging

**SandraS:** does every know how to use the private chat feature?

**BJB2** thinks we may need a just in time lesson on private chat

**FredK:** yes, obviously

**JesseB:** Do you get there from "Actions"?

**BethBre:** Is that the little icon next to the green i?

**SandraS:** ooh, great learners and explorers here

**BJB2:** you can double click on a name under the here tab to open a small private chat window

**BJB2:** careful, the private chat likes to hide!

**BJB2:** make sure your sound is on

**SandraS:** if you click on the HERE tab to the left of this text box

**SandraS:** then you'll highlight a name

**FredK:** It is available on the bottom bar

**SandraS:** and click on the face icon on the bottom

**SandraS:** ok, so you need partners

**SandraS:** then I'll give you the prompt for you to pass notes about

**SandraS:** how about Beth & BJ

**MelissaMJB:** I think I got it! I sent one to Beth

**FredK:** Should Bj and I close the private chat?

**SandraS** claps for Melissa

**SandraS:** no, you two can keep chatting

**MelissaMJB:** yay

**SandraS:** ok, so Melissa and Beth

**SandraS:** that leaves Aileen and Jesse

**SandraS:** everybody got their partner?

**AileenC:** Yes

**BJB2** nods

**SandraS:** once the chat window opens just keep typing there

**SandraS:** your transcript will include this conversation

**BJB2** . o O ( enter text in the bottom and then press the enter key on your keyboard to sent the text )

**SusanR** joined the room.

**SandraS:** I won't be able to call time, so just keep passing notes to each other for about 5 minutes

**BJB2:** you will hear a bell prompt each time you send and receive a message

**SandraS:** if you keep an eye on this window, I'll let you know when you need to come back here

**SandraS** nods to BJ

**BJB2:** did you give us topics yet, Sandy?

**SandraS:** ok, so here's what you'll be passing notes about

**SandraS:** it's a quotation from Paolo Freire

**BJB2** sits on her hands and waits patiently

**SandraS** chuckles

**SandraS:** To study is not to consume ideas, but to create and re-create them.

**SandraS:** That's the prompt.

**SandraS:** OK, pass notes!

**SandraS:** what do you think about the quotation, how does it speak to you?

**SusanR:** sorry I am late

**SandraS:** we're passing notes to each other through the private chat function

**SusanR** listens quietly at the back of the room

**SusanR** . o O ( thought so )

**SandraS:** OK, everybody want to come back here?

**MelissaMJB:** We just come back

**BJB2:** I'm back.

**SandraS:** hi

**SandraS:** yeah!

**SandraS:** we need Jesse and Aileen

**SandraS:** I'm assuming Fred is back if BJ is

**FredK:** yes

**JesseB:** Hi

**SandraS:** yeah!!!

**BethBre:** I'm back

**MelissaMJB:** Me too

**AileenC:** Hi

**SandraS:** ok, in the classroom, there might be more writing on each side than in private chat

**SandraS:** what did y'all think?

**BethBre:** What a great idea!!! But how do you keep the students on task?

**MelissaMJB:** Good question

**SandraS:** yes, great question

**SandraS:** the timing helps

**SandraS:** they only get about one minute to write

**SandraS:** and then they need to switch

**SandraS:** so I'm busy calling time

**BethBre:** By the way, Sandra, as discussion leader can you see all the private chats and messages

**SandraS:** that keeps a momentum

**SandraS:** no, I can't Beth

**MelissaMJB:** I think it's a good idea so that other students can get to know one another. So often they don't want to bother otherwise

**SandraS:** great point, Melissa

**MelissaMJB:** This way, nobody gets left out.

**SandraS:** also, you can keep them on task by having a de-briefing session as we are

**SandraS:** each group of pairs can discuss a main revelation

**SandraS:** so that the note passing could be on assigned reading

**SandraS:** it could be on almost anything where you want students to go more in-depth

**MelissaMJB:** very interesting! I should use this in my upcoming lesson plan

**SandraS:** any other thoughts about how this might be used?

**SandraS:** go for it, Melissa

**MelissaMJB:** what about if you were taking a novel in class - students can discuss in pairs what they like or don't like about the book

**SandraS:** absolutely!

**BethBre:** the students could hand in the notes after class for the teacher to assess what the comprehension of the concept was

**AileenC:** I have used a similar strategy using AlphaSmart keyboards

**SusanR:** an interesting take on "pairing and sharing"

**SandraS:** oh, that's a cool idea, Beth

**JesseB:** How about as a pre-reading activity to stimulate discussion on a topic or issue?

**SandraS:** yes, Susan

**SandraS:** ooh, also great idea Jesse

**BethBre:** This could be done using Palm handhelds with the students beaming their notes, what a great way to engage the kids

**JesseB:** What are AlphaSmart keyboards?

**SandraS:** I've mostly thought of it and used it for after the reading, but a pre-reading activity would be a great use

**BJB2 . o O** ( you could also use this idea in the Student Campus using the threaded discussion boards )

**SandraS:** oh, cool... palm handhelds

**SandraS:** ooh, cool, BJ

**SandraS:** wow, the ideas here!

**SandraS:** Aileen, can you explain what you said?

**AileenC:** AlphaSmarts are lightweight keyboards that hold small files you can later download to a word processor.

**MelissaMJB:** students can also write down any questions they might have about what they're learning at the time

**SandraS** nods to Melissa

**BethBre:** Melissa that's a great idea!

**SandraS:** so how did you do the exercise with the keyboards, Aileen?

**MelissaMJB:** We did that in one of my classes and it was so helpful! You also didn't feel embarrassed to ask a question either

**AileenC:** You can also have one student start a note, then pass to next student to add more details

**SandraS:** great idea

**SandraS:** what I love about the idea, and by the way, it comes from a book on lesson plans for literature circles... is that it's so illicit

**MelissaMJB:** students can play a "jeopardy" game out it almost

**SandraS:** I mean, you take something students aren't supposed to do

**SandraS:** pass notes in class

**BethBre:** One question, after the student passes the note, how do you keep the student involved as the note makes it way around the room?

**AileenC:** We did the add-a-note part and also opened a file for developing a list of questions

**SandraS** nods to Melissa

**SandraS:** oh, cool, Aileen

**MelissaMJB:** that would be good!

**JesseB:** It might also take some of the glamour out of extra-curricular note-passing/

**MelissaMJB:** very true

**SandraS:** well, Beth, if you did note passing in pairs, then each person remains engaged in the conversation

**AileenC:** we use at least 8-10 alphasmarts simultaneously

**SandraS:** good point Jesse

**AileenC:** going around the room

**MelissaMJB:** I always like activities where students are learning, even if they don't realize it

**BethBre:** right, I liked that about the pair activity

**SandraS:** and it allows them to slip into comfortable writing

**SandraS:** they use their own voice

**MelissaMJB:** because they're having fun while learning

**SandraS:** but they're talking about content

**SandraS** nods to Melissa

**SandraS:** one trick is to make sure folks don't talk

**SandraS:** but they can talk after you've finished the rounds of note passing

**BethBre:** So the next time a social studies or math teacher tells you they can't take time for writing in their classes, use this!

**SandraS:** again, uses writing to learn

**SandraS:** exactly, Beth

**MelissaMJB:** And too, some students still feel shy to show their writing in class, this lets them do a more one on one conferencing to build their confidence as writers

**SandraS:** great point, Melissa

**JesseB:** I love that idea, Melissa

**SandraS:** they have an immediate audience

**SandraS:** and an authentic one

**SandraS:** they have to think about what they've read or about what they're about to do

**SandraS:** and write about it

**FredK:** Is chat room language allowed?

**MelissaMJB:** So that they become not only logical thinkers, but creative as well

**SandraS** nods to Melissa

**SandraS:** what would you allow, Fred?

**FredK:** I think that spelling is one of the things school is for

**BethBre:** I would discourage chat room language in this exercise, simply to impress the fact that certain types of communication are appropriate in certain situations.

**AileenC:** Any suggestions about encouraging really reluctant writers- or those who write very slowly?

**MelissaMJB:** that's a good point, because being on a messenger program all the time - students can become lazy in their proper grammar and spelling :S

**SandraS:** for this particular exercise, Aileen, or in general?

**AileenC:** both, I think

**BethBre:** Great question Aileen; how do we make allowances for students' needs in this exercise

**MelissaMJB:** We've been learning in English class to have students write out their own journal entries more often . . . I think it helps a bit

**SandraS:** ok, so this is a collective question....reluctant writers in this exercise...

**BJB2:** word walls?

**BethBre:** what's a word wall?

**SandraS** nods to BJ

**BJB2:** a wall or journal page with words that have been learned or that are used frequently in writing

**MelissaMJB:** It might help to have a series of "prompt" questions for discussion perhaps? Give the students time to think about what they want to say

**SandraS:** which speaks to one of the ways to encourage reluctant writers

**BethBre:** thank you!

**SandraS:** use space, art, images

**SandraS:** kinesthesia

**AileenC:** Or, give the prompts a day or two ahead

**SandraS:** word walls mean the writer has to look up at the wall

**MelissaMJB:** Pictures can say a lot!

**SandraS:** right, and reluctant writers can perhaps draw first, then write

**MelissaMJB:** as in they can't think of what to write, so they're in a daze?

**SandraS:** for instance, I saw a teaching demo by a 10th grade language arts teacher

**SandraS:** teaching Poe's "House of Usher"

**SusanR:** they can use simple graphic organizers to help them write

**MelissaMJB:** that's one activity I had thought of too! Students can even make a comic out of say their favorite part in a book

**SandraS:** there's a great passage that describes the houses

**SandraS:** and students make pictures of the house of Usher based on the description

**SandraS:** it's a great way for them to read more deeply

**SandraS:** then they can write a poem, or write more about the story

**SandraS:** but the drawing focuses ideas, gives insights

**AileenC:** OK - how about a click and drag word list in something like Inspiration?

**SandraS:** Susan, graphic organizers...great idea

**MelissaMJB:** wonderful!! I love incorporating the fine arts into things like that - it's important to offer students options

**SandraS:** Aileen, can you explain Inspiration?

**BJB2** hugs Melissa...good suggestion

**SandraS**: magnetic poetry....online

**MelissaMJB**: you're welcome - it's that wonderful arts education training! LOL

**BJB2**: btw, Monday's Music Across the Curriculum topic is Music and Grammar

**SandraS**: ooh.....that sounds too cool

**MelissaMJB**: OOh how great!!

**AileenC**: It is a software application that easily allows users to create webs, graphic organizers, etc

**MelissaMJB**: students would love that I bet

**SandraS**: music and grammar....who'd a thunk it?

**SandraS**: thanks Aileen

**AileenC**: sure

**MelissaMJB**: oh yes, we've talked about that in my music class      Students can learn rhythm while learning grammar

**SandraS**: wow

**SandraS**: any other ideas for reluctant writers?

**FredK** . o O ( the Tapped In Calendar has lots of good things happening )

**MelissaMJB**: you can play little rhythm games while incorporating grammar in the mix. Keeps it interesting

**SandraS** agrees with Fred

**MelissaMJB**: oh! drama skits!!

**AileenC**: You all came up w/ great ideas I can take back to my dept

**SandraS**: great, Aileen

**SandraS**: yeah, drama skits!

**MelissaMJB:** kids love drama - if they can do a tableau from a scene in a poem/book . . .

**SandraS:** yes.... my college students did that with a novel

**SandraS:** they did a fantastic job

**SandraS:** had to pick and choose the scenes they would dramatize

**SandraS:** allows them to get to know the text soooo much better

**BethBre:** here's an idea for adding technology to writing

**SandraS** listens

**MelissaMJB:** or act out a powerful scene in a novel to give others a visual of what's going on. Something I never considered before was that some students have trouble with getting a "picture" in their mind when they read . . . and so they may often have difficulty in writing as well

**BethBre:** use excel to list major events in a book, then students use numbers to indicate the importance of the events

**SandraS:** oh, cool...did you just think of that Beth?

**SandraS:** I agree, Melissa

**BethBre:** say -2 for life threatening, -1 for negative, 0 for neutral, 1 for positive and 2 for life changing

**AileenC:** or to practice sequencing the major events

**MelissaMJB:** ooh, I like that idea too! Good one

**SandraS:** that is a great idea

**SandraS:** I'm so glad I'm getting a transcript of all this!

**BethBre:** Finally, have the students graph the numbers and then they have a visual of plot development, peaks, valleys, etc.

**JesseB:** Sorry, folks, I need to go, but great ideas and great meeting y'all. I hope to be back next month!

**SandraS:** ok, so we want math folks to use writing...now we can tell them we use math in writing...

**SandraS:** Thanks for sharing your ideas Jesse

**BJB2:** The December writetalk discussion will be on Dec 14

**SandraS:** We are at the end of the hour.

**JesseB:** Great, I'll watch for it

**SandraS:** Yeah, BJ..thanks for mentioning that.

**JesseB** left the room (signed off).

**SandraS:** If you join the group, you'll get an email reminder

**MelissaMJB:** nice meeting all of you and reading some awesome ideas!

**AileenC:** Thanks everyone - this was a great hour!

**BethBre:** This has been a GREAT session, thanks everyone for all your inspiration.

**FredK:** Would puppets help with visualization

**SandraS:** ooh, great idea Fred

**MelissaMJB:** definitely!!

**AileenC:** yup!

**FredK:** Thanks Sandra

**SandraS:** Thanks to all of you for your fantastic sharing.

**SandraS:** I'm energized for teaching!

**AileenC:** Thanks Sandra and BJ

**MelissaMJB:** me too!

**SandraS:** Everyone have a good evening.

**AileenC:** G'night

**SandraS:** Take care!

**FredK:** you too

**MelissaMJB:** thanks you too!

**BJB2:** Thanks for your enthusiastic participation!