

Title of Session: WriteTalk - Sharing Best Practices in Writing

Moderator: Sandra Shattuck

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Room: WriteTalk Group

BJ: Welcome to today's WriteTalk discussion

BJ: we usually start Tapped In discussions with introductions

BJ: please let Sandy know where you are located and what brings you to the discussion

AshleyBar: My name is Ashley and I am a student at the University of Houston

AshleyTH: Hi Sandra, my name is Ashley as well and I am also attending UH.

NancyNoy: my name is Nancy and I am currently doing my student teaching in a kinder class

TeresaLP: Hello everyone, I teach art and writing in an elementary school.

DavidWe: I'm David Weksler. I'm a HelpDesk volunteer and I lead a math education and technology discussion. I'm in New Jersey close to New York City

AshleyBar: I wanted to participate in this chat because it sounded interesting and something that could help me when I start teaching

LizethE: I'm Lizeth. I'm a Bilingual student teacher in a multi age (K-1) classroom located in Houston, TX (also attending UH).

NancyNoy: I was asked to do two professional developments and I am interested in this session

AshleyTH: Wow David, I did not realize you lived so far away. That's cool.

AshleyBar: I just left a Kinder class and I am now student teaching in a second grade classroom.

SandraS waves to Susan

SusanR: Hi Sandra

DavidWe . o O (BJ is in Pennsylvania and Susan is in Ontario, Canada, Ashley)

SandraS: I think that just leaves Yasmine and Susan and me for intros

SandraS: I teach literature and writing in Alabama, college

AshleyTH: You are far away from most of us too.

SusanR: I am a K to 8 Occasional Teacher and online facilitator for the K to 3+ Great Resources sessions here at TI

SusanR: from Ontario, Canada

AshleyTH: I attended your K+3 Resources session. You recommended this session to me. Thank you!

TerriG: I'm from Laredo, TX

SandraS: Excellent...I'm going to go ahead.

MaryannDu: hi. I am an educational consultant and evaluator from Chicago. I focus on the link between research and practice and learning and assessment

BJ: I'm a remedial communications teacher in Pennsylvania

SandraS: Thank you all for your introductions.

YasmineT: I'm an e-learning student from Sydney, Australia

AshleyBar: Wow!

DavidWe: Yasmine wins!

NancyNoy: that's far

SandraS: OK, I usually start with a short spiel on the National Writing Project

SandraS: which is a professional development organization that started in 1973 at Berkeley

SandraS: there are almost 200 sites at colleges and the sites serve mostly k-12 folks

SandraS: each site has a Summer Institute as a central project

SandraS: there are 3 main tenets that NWP practices

SandraS: Teachers are the best teachers of other teachers...

TeresaLP: where can you find more about the National Writing Project?

SandraS: no canned professional development

SandraS: I'll let you know in a sec, Teresa

SandraS: teachers teach writing better if they improve their own writing

SandraS: writing is a powerful learning tool across all suBJect matters

SandraS: good one, Maryann!

SandraS: ok, let's check out the site

SandraS: I'll give you the url

SandraS: you can visit for a couple minutes

SandraS: then come on back here

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

SandraS: you can click on a map

SandraS: to see if there's a writing project site near you

SandraS: OK, who's back?

AshleyBar: I'm back

MaryannDu: me

YasmineT: me too

SandraS greets returning trekkers

TerriG: I'm back

SandraS: Great!

AshleyBar: there is a site right at the University of Houston

SandraS: Any questions before we go on?

LizethE: Houston we have one...but at UH-Clearlake

NancyNoy: this project is in many universities

SandraS: Yes, there are almost 200 sites

TerriG: There is one in Laredo

SandraS: There's one in the Virgin Islands

SandraS: Puerto Rico

AshleyTH: wow. that's good to know.

LizethE: Terri there is one at TAMIU

TerriG: yes

SandraS: Each site focuses on three main areas: Summer Institute, continuity, inservice...

SandraS: so writing project sites usually provide professional development

NancyNoy: University of Houston-Main Campus does not have one

NancyNoy: though

LizethE: right...it's at the clear lake campus

SandraS: once you attend a Summer Institute, you can then participate in all NWP events...writing retreats, conferences...

AshleyTH: oh

SandraS waves to Diana

TerriG: that's great

AshleyBar smiles

DavidWe: Wow, what a GREAT project!

DavidWe waves to Susan

SandraS: the annual conference always takes place right before the NCTE conference

SandraS: Any other questions?

AshleyTH: I am glad there is something like this to let us know about all of the resources out there.

ErikaSa: yes, that's nice

SandraS: The NWP website is a fantastic resource

MaryannDu: does each site focus on something different? in terms of writing?

SandraS: If you take some time to explore, you'll find an abundance

AshleyTH: I agree

TeresaLP: Thanks for the site. Is the summer institute a class?

MaryannDu: what would you expect to cover..

SandraS: Maryann, there can be different foci

SandraS: for instance, some sites might focus more on technology

SandraS: or ELL

SandraS: or reading/writing connections

SandraS: really depends on what folks want to do

NancyNoy: how long is each project?

MaryannDu: do teachers do writing? and what about?

LizethE: Oh this is going to be SO helpful

LuisI: Thanks

SandraS: the summer institutes are 4 or 5 weeks long

SandraS: Yes! Teachers write!

AshleyTH: definitely

TerriG: are they full days?

ErikaSa: sounds interesting

SandraS: NWP really believes that teachers who improve their own writing just teach more effectively

NancyNoy: I believe that also

AshleyTH: I agree with that.

SandraS: yes, usually full days....9-4 for instance

AshleyBar: so it is basically like taking a summer course

SandraS: many summer institutes work for graduate credit

SandraS: yes, it can be like taking a summer course

MaryannDu: yes, I agree with that. I am a writer and often I will read something I have written... and if I can't understand it... well I know that I have to make it clearer.

SandraS: but it's much more fun!

AshleyTH: I knew writing was the foundation for all su**B**Jects, but I did not realize how much it holds students back if they do not understand print until I actually got into the classroom.

SandraS: yes, the summer institutes have response groups

SandraS: teacher demonstrations

AshleyTH: I really want to find resources that will teach me how to help students!

SandraS: OK, here's another great resource from the website

TerriG: is there a limit of how many can attend

SandraS: if you go to publications, you'll see that NWP publishes The Quarterly

SandraS: This is now online...all back issues...and completely searchable

DavidWe guesses it comes out every 3 months

AshleyBar: wow, that's great

SandraS: so, for instance, you want to use journals in your class but you're not sure how to

TeresaLP: thats good know, thanks

SandraS: just search for "journals" and you'll get some great articles

NancyNoy: that's me!

ErikaSa: sounds great!

LizethE: WILL DO!

SandraS: Let's just take a sec to check that out....let's try this....

TerriG: terrific

AshleyTH: ok. thanks

SandraS: when you go back to the NWP website

ErikaSa: okay

SandraS: I'll give you the URL again in a sec

SandraS: click on publications

SandraS: then click on The Quarterly

SandraS: then just search for something you're interested in

SandraS: and then come back here and let us know what you found

SandraS: ok, so here's the URL again

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

AshleyBar: Dialogue Journals: Passing notes the academic way looks like a good read

NancyNoy: oh I think I have read articles from The Quarterly through NY university's library

AshleyTH: Thanks Ashley. I will have to check that out.

LizethE: wow...lots and lots of articles...for ELLs

YasmineT: the voice looks interesting and the article on kid's digital storytelling

TerriG: there's so much

SandraS: Wow, some great topics

SandraS: Can be overwhelming, Terri...

TerriG: somewhat!

AshleyTH: I know all of this is a little overwhelming.

SandraS: But because NWP believes that school reform comes from the inside, from teachers, it also believes in getting teachers' voices out to the public

SandraS: so NWP really supports teacher research and writing

SandraS: reflective practice

ErikaSa: that's nice

AshleyTH: I am not used to talking to this many people, then when you add trying to look at sites, it gets crazy!

SandraS: Ashley, the nice thing is that you'll have a transcript emailed

SandraS: so you can take time later to check out sites

TerriG: I like the fact that there is teacher research

SandraS: review what we talked about

SandraS: I agree, Terri

MaryannDu: yes, I do to

AshleyTH: that's true, I just feel like I have a hard time keeping up.

TeresaLP: Is the writing project for all grades

MaryannDu: but we can't tell that!

LizethE: thanks for the sites...they are great resources for us preservice teachers that are trying to get as much as possible!

SandraS: This form of communication takes a bit of practice, Ashley...but you're doing great!

AshleyTH: thanks

SandraS: Yes, Teresa...it's for all grades

SandraS: and that's the really cool thing

SandraS: I've learned so much from elementary school teachers, middle school teachers

SandraS: and I've applied what I've learned in the college classroom

AshleyTH: that's cool.

AshleyTH: You really do learn more from other teachers.

SandraS: I agree, Ashley

SandraS: There's another great little publication on the site

SandraS: called 30 Ideas for Teaching Writing

TeresaLP: Are they focusing on teaching teachers to teach students

NancyNoy: sounds interesting

SandraS: it's got 30 quick ideas

SandraS: and each one is linked to the original article in The Quarterly

AshleyTH: that is good.

AshleyBar: where is this publication located?

SandraS: Yes, Teresa

SandraS: Hang on, Ashley...let me find it

AshleyBar: ok, thanks

SandraS: OK, under Publications

NancyNoy: I want to see that also!

SandraS: it's under OTHER Publications

SandraS: third item

SandraS: so Publications is on top of screen

SandraS: pulldown menu will give you "Other Publications"

SandraS: click on that

SandraS: then you'll see "30 Ideas" as third in the list

SandraS: it's a great way to jumpstart your creative teaching juices

TerriG: I liked that--it's great!

AshleyBar: thank you

ErikaSa: great ideas!

ErikaSa: thank you!

SandraS: so....the topic for tonight's WriteTalk is to talk about teaching ideas you want to try but haven't yet done so....

MaryannDu: ummmm

SandraS: So we might have a few of those tonight with so many pre-service teachers!

AshleyTH: that sounds good.

SandraS: teaching ideas that involve writing...

SandraS: reading/writing connections

SandraS: technology and writing..

SandraS: writing and anything....

SandraS: anyone want to jump in?

NancyNoy: I like # 14! pairing

AshleyTH: I have noticed writing is a hard topic to teach.

SandraS: OK, Ashley, a truer word was never spoken!

LizethE: so many strategies

SandraS: Writing is hard to teach...because writing is hard...but it can also be exhilarating!

TeresaLP: For second, how can you help students to stay on the same topic within a paragraph.

AshleyBar: the teacher I am working with now has the students write in their journal everyday. She has a gigantic book of journal topics.

MaryannDu: I think writing is hard, because thinking is hard!

TerriG: right!

SandraS: I so agree, Maryann...

MaryannDu: and the communication you are doing in writing is from the thinking

SandraS: ok, so let's take Teresa's request for help...

MaryannDu: yes

ErikaSa: ok

TerriG: technology should make it easier....right?

SandraS: how do we help students keep a paragraph unified...

SandraS: one hopes, Terri!

AshleyBar: She says that is important to keep many samples of writing because some kids might feel off one day or they might not like the topic they are writing about, therefore not displaying their best work

YasmineT: describe what each paragraph contains

MaryannDu: could be

MaryannDu: I also think that as kids write they don't always know how to create the paragraph

MaryannDu: they just write

TerriG: makes sense, Ashley

YasmineT: like in the first paragraph should be an opening so define or describe the topic

TeresaLP: ok

MaryannDu: I do things like. write each sentence on a card, or strip.

SandraS: also, after each sentence, the writer can ask, "What does my reader expect next?"

LizethE: our fourth grade bilingual class heavily focused on using story arcs....and it helped them stay on topic

SandraS: ooh, I like that Maryann

MaryannDu: then see if you can put them in order, and what is missing or needs more

NancyNoy: that's true many times kids are just asked to write without brainstorming

SandraS: another great idea, Liseth

AshleyTH: The third grade teacher I just left had the kids come up with 10 main topics (my sister, Easter, the park, etc), then from those ten topics students had to pick an exact event. When it is time to write they pick one of their topics and write. They then add to their writings, edit and publish them. The kids like it because they pick what they are writing about.

MaryannDu: yes

AshleyBar: I think brainstorming is key when writing

ErikaSa: I think brainstorming is necessary too

YasmineT: I used their favorite tv programs once

ErikaSa: otherwise students just go off topic all the time

YasmineT: asked them to write about that

MaryannDu: I think that we expect that writing will flow and it is a process

SandraS: Teresa, did you see anything that helped you with your question?

NancyNoy: that's the time when others or the teacher can help and guide

AshleyBar: I think kids like to write about things that they can relate to or with

AshleyBar: I know I do

ErikaSa: I agree

YasmineT: oh absolutely

MaryannDu: so we have to teach kids the process and that it is time consuming and it is about making sense

LizethE: yes!

AshleyTH: I agree as well

TerriG: yes

MaryannDu: yes, they more they know the easier to write!

NancyNoy: process....that's IT!

ErikaSa: yeah

TeresaLP: Yes, brainstorming ideas on slips of paper sounds good.

MaryannDu: my son had a teacher once

MaryannDu: who had them write a 3 paragraph story

LizethE: I found our bilingual students found it easier that way! How can they write about a topic they cannot relate to?

AshleyTH: I agree with you Maryann

MaryannDu: then on Monday they found all the nouns and worked on them. She had them underline in red

MaryannDu: but no rewriting yet, just notes

SandraS listens to Maryann

MaryannDu: on Tuesday they underlined verbs in blue and talked about them and reflected on their story for the verbs and made lists of new ones

TeresaLP: ok

MaryannDu: on Wed they did adjectives

MaryannDu: on Thursday adverbs

MaryannDu: Friday pronouns, and connections

AshleyTH: did the students like this?

MaryannDu: so the paper was all different colors

NancyNoy: in my last placement my teacher used soo many diagrams

NancyNoy: is that good?

ErikaSa: that sounds like a good strategy Maryann

NancyNoy: I mean there were so many

MaryannDu: then they rewrote

MaryannDu: yes, I think it was an excellent strategy.

NancyNoy: that's a long process Maryann

SandraS: So the writers are working on the craft

ErikaSa: did your son enjoy doing that Maryann?

SandraS: They're using their own writing

AshleyTH: thanks for the idea.

MaryannDu: yes and no

AshleyTH: why yes and no

TeresaLP: I like the strategy to.

ErikaSa: why?

MaryannDu: he was in 6 grade and did very well and it was not too hard, but he had to work on it

AshleyBar: do you think any of the kids got bored with this task?

MaryannDu: but his writing is excellent now

MaryannDu: and I think that one of the reasons was that

AshleyTH: that's good.

NancyNoy: takes time but worth it Maryann

MaryannDu: well, it was very fast when it happened as she had lots of things to do that day, and this was just one of them

SandraS: Think of the student's engagement when s/he find pronouns in his/her own writing

ErikaSa: maybe if he didn't have to do it so many times it would have been more enjoying for him

MaryannDu: and so it might have been like the 15 minute warm up and review

SandraS: instead of circling pronouns in a grammar book..

AshleyBar: that's true!

NancyNoy: true

ErikaSa: I agree

SusanR: I have seen grade 6 students create mini brainstorming webs before they began their daily writing..I gather they were taught that strategy

MaryannDu: and lots of discussion and working in groups finding new words for their story ones so that when they rewrote they would have lists

AshleyTH: me too

MaryannDu: well, I think that he liked it enough and really learned from it.

SandraS: Susan, could you explain "mini brainstorming webs"?

AshleyBar: Sometimes the students in my second grade class are able to use a thesaurus to enhance their writing

MaryannDu: it was only for one week!

NancyNoy: like the idea Maryann

MaryannDu: so it was a fantastic review and it was deep learning, not superficial

AshleyTH: it sounds good

ErikaSa: oh, sounds good

TeresaLP: Thanks, Ashley

LizethE: sounds effective

ErikaSa: great strategy

SusanR: they would take out a piece of paper and start webbing the idea and then work from that web

MaryannDu: yes and they love it I bet, Ashley!

AshleyBar: The kids love it. It's fun to watch them learn new words.

MaryannDu: yes, webbing is great, and helps put things in some relationships to other things

SusanR: free thinking on the topic, Sandra

SandraS: So webbing is one form of brainstorming

MaryannDu: yes

AshleyBar: One little boy walked around all day telling everyone his new word and what it meant.

MaryannDu: a tool to process and organize brainstorming

SandraS: And we've just all agreed that brainstorming is crucial in the writing process

MaryannDu: lol

TeresaLP: yes

AshleyTH: yes

TerriG: yes

ErikaSa: of course

YasmineT: yes

SandraS: And Ashley was talking about the need for writers to pick their own topics

NancyNoy: yes

SandraS: for writers to be able to relate to the topic

MaryannDu: I think yes and no on that

TeresaLP: Students write more about what they know.

MaryannDu: yes for most of the time when it is for writing and getting better at writing

NancyNoy: teachers can get better writing with topics of their choice

TerriG: yes, agree Teresa

MaryannDu: but then sometimes we have to learn how to write something else and how to do that

AshleyBar: If I can't relate to a topic, first I may get confused about what I need to write about and then if I don't like the topic I get bored.

AshleyTH: that is true

ErikaSa: I agree

TerriG: right

ErikaSa: the students need to be interested in order to write

AshleyBar: I agree

SandraS: Maybe it's a case of taking any topic and finding something one can relate to...

TerriG: exactly

SandraS: or run with...

NancyNoy: I agree Ashley

YasmineT: we have to find a way to make it relevant to the students,

AshleyTH: I agree

ErikaSa: me too

TeresaLP: yes

SandraS: Maryann has a point that writing on demand usually does not take the student's choice in mind

NancyNoy: but sometimes testing requires other kinds of writing

MaryannDu: Ashley-- if you get confused, that relates to not liking, that relates to bored -- so does bored mean I don't get it or like it??? I ask because I hear students saying that and I wonder...

ErikaSa: that's true Nancy

AshleyBar: I guess because I get bored and then I don't even want to try

AshleyBar: Or I just don't know anything about the topic and therefore have no idea where to start

AshleyBar: that's where brainstorming comes in

AshleyTH: If I don't understand something I don't want to write, but if it is boring I tend to not even really try. I notice students do that also.

LizethE: I observed that in our bilingual students

NancyNoy: starting point.....that's my issue also

ChristiF: Isn't it possible for a student to become interested by means of a pre-selected idea prompt?

MaryannDu: I think this is very important. Because if you had someone giving you more structure or where you could connect to it, then you might not be bored...

TerriG: yes, Maryann

AshleyTH: I agree with that

MaryannDu: sometimes we do need more info to write...

TerriG: I think structure clears the confusion

SandraS: one place to start is with what one does not know....

AshleyBar: my teacher would always do a mini brain storm activity with the entire class as a jumping off point

MaryannDu: I know that is true for me

MaryannDu: I think, I don't know what this means

LizethE: It's like our students were given a prompt on spending a summer at a boat house....our students were like "What's a boat house?"

MaryannDu: so I start just like you said, the questions, what don't I know

TeresaLP: explain how that works Ashley

AshleyTH: You would be surprised by how much you assume students know, but they don't.

TerriG: true

MaryannDu: yes yes yes

MaryannDu: context is everything

SandraS: I think the main thing is to get students writing

AshleyBar: every student would just start talking about the topic for the day and throwing around ideas. Then our teacher would write these ideas on the board and we would discuss

SandraS: and writing

SandraS: and writing

MaryannDu: great idea

SandraS: Donald Graves, who recently passed away, talks about how important it is to spend TIME writing

LuisI: So how do you get students to write on something they don't know?

SandraS: and a fairly new publication of the NWP

TeresaLP: thanks Ashley

AshleyBar: of course then some students would just write about the same thing, so she always stressed originality

SandraS: Because Writing Matters

SandraS: also discusses this

ChristiF: Writing should include research so that the 'boat house' may become part of their experience

SandraS: writing...research...writing AS learning

LizethE: how can it become part of their experience if these bilingual students do not have a clue of what it looks like?

MaryannDu: I think the idea you gave is a good beginning. maybe the next step could be what do I not know that I would like to learn?

AshleyTH: This is completely random but in my third grade class we were reading a passage practicing for TAKS. It was about Walt Disney. We read the story together then the students tried to answer the questions. I noticed they were confused and then I found out they didn't know Walt Disney is the same person from Disney movies. I assumed they would know that.

AshleyBar: make the idea you own in some way and not just like everyone else

LuisI: The reality of many writing assessments is that they will have a prompt... i.e. the 4th grade writing assessment.

SandraS listens to Luis

TeresaLP: visuals work well with second language students.

NancyNoy: I agree Luis

AshleyTH: visuals work well with all students

ErikaSa: me too Luis

SandraS has graded the new writing section of the SAT and has seen lots of prompts

NancyNoy: that's the focus in many classrooms as the state testing approaches

AshleyTH: I have noticed that too.

LuisI: As a second language learner myself, writing was the most difficult for me.

SandraS: again, I think the amount of writing one does in the classroom helps immensely

SandraS nods to Luis

ErikaSa: yes it does

AshleyTH: I have noticed writing is difficult for almost everyone.

TerriG: yes, agree

SandraS: writing is the last linguistic skill in any language

NancyNoy: Luis are you a teacher already?

AshleyBar: I think students should write everyday, even if it is about what they are going to do when they get home

MaryannDu: giving students strategies for prompts is good. like if you read a prompt that asks for xxx first think about what you know and then about what you need to know. you can always write that I could answer this question better but I don't know.....

LuisI: I agree with an earlier comment about structure.... I was a teacher for 10 years, now I am an administrator.

NancyNoy: ohh

AshleyTH: that is cool.

AshleyTH: do you miss teaching Luis?

TeresaLP: I have also noticed to that most of the students are having writing problems.

MaryannDu: also it is good to write for many reasons.... notes to each other, on the board, in a variety of ways. cards to each other, that they make and use in the classroom

NancyNoy: but freewriting can only help a student to a certain extent

ErikaSa: yeah

SusanR . o O (wonders how many of you are blogging with your students)

MaryannDu: me

SandraS: Great question, Susan

SusanR: a great motivator

SandraS: me, too

NancyNoy: not me

AshleyBar: that's a great idea

AshleyTH: I never blog with my students.

ErikaSa: not me

TerriG: not me

MaryannDu: or even writing notes to kids

LuisI: This conversation about writing has always intrigued me because it wasn't until I hit college that I was taught the structure of writing. Basically, tell me what your opinion is or was.... and support it based on your experiences....

NancyNoy: no time for computers only TAKS

BJ: We only have 5 minutes left. The next WriteTalk discussion is April 12

AshleyTH: I am in a lower income school and honestly most of my kids don't have computers at home.

LizethE: I write notes to them in their free writing journals

SandraS: ok, so we need another Write Talk session on blogging....

SandraS: thanks BJ

BJ: I recommend that you join this group to get reminders of upcoming discussions

SandraS: and we'll have a guest speaker

SandraS: on MEMOIR

YasmineT: how about using a multimedia package to prompt writing from an article in VOICE they said it encourages them to write...hard, and they are willing to share them

MaryannDu: fun

TerriG: great! thanks

ErikaSa: cool

LuisI: I always journaled with my students..... as well as responded.... made writing REAL.

SandraS: Yasmine, great idea

ErikaSa: that sounds good

SandraS: Luis, great practice!

NancyNoy: I will do that some day Luis

LizethE: real and always sparked another topic for their next one

AshleyBar: I read in a magazine that a teacher had a note board. students could post messages on these boards to each other. the teacher could also write notes to her students.

ErikaSa: I think students really need to see that their writing is important

AshleyTH: I have noticed students like to write if you read their writings and respond to them, no matter what they are writing about.

LuisI: VOICE sounds like a great idea.... would like to hear more on that topic

SandraS: Thanks to BJ for reminding us about signing up for WriteTalk

YasmineT: thanks to all of you

AshleyTH: They want to feel like you actually care about what they are writing.

NancyNoy: thank you all for your information

BJ: Thanks, Sandy, for leading the discussion!

MaryannDu: thanks! great discussion

AshleyBar: thank you!!!

SandraS: Huge thanks to everyone for participating!

NancyNoy: great minds out there

ErikaSa: even as a college students, I always wanted feedback on my writing

LuisI: I have learned so much from all of you!

TeresaLP: thanks for your suggestions!

AshleyTH: Thank you Sandra.

NancyNoy shakes everyone's hands

BJ smiles...that's what a community of practice is for!

LizethE: Great discussion and always wonderful to see the shared perspectives!

SandraS bows to all

ErikaSa: thanks everyone!

BJ waves goodnight