

**Title of Session:** WriteTalk  
**Moderator:** Sandra Shattuck  
**Title of File:** 20071-11writetalk  
**Date:** October 11, 2007

Room: WriteTalk Group

**SandraS:** Welcome to Tapped In, Joshua!

**BjB:** Josh, we usually start all tapped in discussions with introductions

**SandraS:** We usually say where and what we teach...

**SandraS:** I teach literature and writing in Alabama at two colleges

**BjB:** I'm in south central Pennsylvania and teach communication

**DavidW:** I work mostly with teachers helping them learn more about educational technology. I'm in New Jersey, near NYC

**JoshuaJD:** I teach 7th grade learning support in the Erie school district in Erie Pennsylvania

**SandraS:** Looks like this is your first day at Tapped In, so I hope you're enjoying yourself!

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

**JoshuaJD:** Yes I am

**SandraS:** Glad to hear that, Joshua

**SandraS:** Everyone here except Joshua has heard this spiel a gazillion times! so let's see if I can find the short version....

**SandraS:** National Writing Project is a professional development organization that has been around over 30 years

**SandraS:** started at UC Berkeley

**SandraS:** the tenets are that teachers are the best teachers of other teachers

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

**SandraS:** and that writing is a great learning tool across all subject disciplines

**SandraS:** NWP is federally funded and has about 200 sites housed at universities

**SandraS:** serves mostly k-12 folks

**SandraS:** main project at each site is a summer institute

**SandraS:** you can see if there's a NWP site near you by checking the map on the website

**SandraS:** I'll give the URL and you can go visit the website for a bit and then come back here.

**SandraS:** Does that sound ok, Joshua?

**JoshuaJD:** Sounds good

**SandraS:** ok -- here's the website: <http://www.nwp.org>

**SandraS:** Are you back yet, Joshua?

**JoshuaJD:** I am back

**SandraS:** Great!

**SandraS:** The NWP website was just revamped, and it's got lots of fantastic information.

**SandraS:** A great search engine.

**SandraS:** You can check publications, too.

**SandraS:** The Quarterly is the online journal

**BjB:** I love the search engine

**SandraS:** Me, too.

**JoshuaJD:** It has all educational articles?

**BjB:** very easy to find writing ideas for just about any discipline, Joshua

**SandraS:** So if you were interested in developing exercises for ESL students, you could find lots of resources.

**SandraS:** Yes.

**SandraS:** Why don't we try it.

**SandraS:** Do you have any particular interest you'd like to research a bit?

**SandraS:** Anything in your teaching you'd like help with?

**SandraS:** In your own writing?

**JoshuaJD:** Actually this is my first year in 7th grade and we are just doing the 7th grade writing assessments as we speak. Tomorrow they are finishing them up.

**SandraS:** OK. Maybe a topic on middle school writing...

**JoshuaJD:** I am the learning support teacher and we do full inclusion

**SandraS:** OK, great.

**JoshuaJD:** Yeah

**SandraS:** Let's see what NWP comes up with when we input a search term such as "full inclusion" or "middle school writing"....

**SandraS:** Let's go back to <http://www.nwp.org> and use the search function

**SandraS:** then come back here and report what we find

**SandraS:** I found a great article using "inclusion" as my search term -- "Inclusion and the Multiple Intelligences: Creating a Student-centered Curriculum"

**SandraS:** Are you back Joshua?

**BjB:** I searched for "art" and got a great lesson on Building a Story: the Art of Narrative

**SandraS:** cool

**SandraS:** o O ( BJ always finds story stuff no matter what... )

**BjB:** smiles...sure seems that way!

**DavidW:** hopes there is a lot of "story stuff"

**SandraS:** I got Of Paint and Poetry: Strengthening Literacy Through Art when I searched for "visual images"

**JoshuaJD:** I am back and found an interesting article

**SandraS:** oh, cool...what did you find?

**JoshuaJD:** It talked about writing and how handbooks are too general

**JoshuaJD:** It said students often need to be taught the basics

**SandraS:** that sounds interesting

**SandraS:** We've been talking about our finds

**JoshuaJD:** Instead of telling a student to be more specific or strengthen their intro you actually have to demonstrate or show them how to do that

**SandraS:** I used the term "inclusion" and found something on multiple intelligences and the student-centered classroom

**SandraS:** ah, yes...modeling does seem to help a lot

**SandraS:** BJ found something using "art" on building a story

**JoshuaJD:** How do you get a student interested when they don't seem like they like to write or don't want to write?

**SandraS:** that's the central question, eh?

**SandraS:** I think one way is through those multiple intelligences

**SandraS:** using visual images, sound, kinesthetic moves

**JoshuaJD:** We always get the "man, why do we have to do this"

**SandraS:** ah, yes!

**SandraS:** one thing is also to invite students to be responsible

**JoshuaJD:** That's good

**SandraS:** for instance, if I do a lot of freewriting, then I might have students come up with the prompt for the day

**DavidW . o O ( writing for a purpose - explaining something to someone else )**

**SandraS** nods to David

**JoshuaJD:** each student has their own prompt?

**SandraS:** no, we use one prompt for everyone

**JoshuaJD:** ok

**SandraS:** I try to tailor the prompts to whatever we're working on...

**SandraS:** but if you're just using freewriting as a way to get some writing in, the prompts can be anything...

**SandraS:** if you check the Files link in the window above, you'll find a file called "wrtpract.doc"

**SandraS:** it explains how I do freewriting

**SandraS:** I'm sorry...the file isn't there

**JoshuaJD:** yeah I didn't see it

**SandraS:** but you can find it if you highlight my name under the Here tab

**SandraS:** then click on the green icon below

**SandraS:** you'll see my profile and I have a link to the writing practice document

**SandraS:** it's under Shared Files on the very bottom

**BJB:** did you find the document, Joshua?

**SandraS:** but that's another way to get reluctant writers engaged

**SandraS:** encourage lots of writing that isn't graded...and that is focused on topics that interest them

**BJB:**

[http://tappedin.org/tappedin/do/FileAction?ROOM\\_ID=7437&FILE\\_ID=1556&state=doDownloadFile](http://tappedin.org/tappedin/do/FileAction?ROOM_ID=7437&FILE_ID=1556&state=doDownloadFile)

**SandraS:** thanks, BJ!

**BJB:** you're welcome, Sandy ;-)

**JoshuaJD:** Yes I have it. Thanks

**SandraS:** Great!

**SandraS:** when we teach writing, we actually never seem to spend enough time just writing in the classroom

**SandraS:** doing some kind of freewriting ensures that we write

**SandraS:** with freewriting, I also have everyone read what they've written

**SandraS:** just go around the room and read

**SandraS:** no comments

**SandraS:** it's a kind of low pressure feedback

**JeffC** nods... did it years ago at RHS.

**SandraS:** great for building up reluctant writers' confidence in their own words

**SandraS:** I'm also finding that collaborative writing across schools generates interest

**SandraS:** I gotta talk about this current project I'm doing, because it's really cool!

**JeffC:** that does help... and what really worked for me was having the students write about themselves... and eventually get published around the world in student papers. That started out with freewriting.

**JeffC:** go for it

**SandraS:** My two composition classes are collaborating with three senior high school classes in Nebraska

**SandraS:** We're using Google Docs

**JeffC:** cool

**SandraS:** and everybody is writing a "This I Believe" essay

**SandraS:** based on the program on NPR

**SandraS:** <http://thisibelieve.org>

**DavidW:** Long time ago, heard about a 3 site project of students with very limited Internet access, but geographically dispersed (New Mexico, Louisiana, Alaska) - doing things like writing about snow or the desert, things the other groups had little experience with

**SandraS:** that is cool, David

**SandraS:** So we're talking about collaboration across schools

**DavidW:** it just seemed to be a great, AUTHENTIC, writing project

**SandraS:** yes, that's the key

**SandraS:** authentic audience

**SandraS:** students writing to other students

**JoshuaJD:** that sounds awesome

**SandraS:** and using writing to introduce themselves and their location

**DavidW:** yes

**JeffC:** mine was with Newsday and Global SchoolHouse... in 1996 or 97... anyhow... ten years ago.

**JoshuaJD:** kind of like a pen pal

**SandraS:** the This I Believe website has a whole curriculum

**SandraS:** yes, Joshua

**JeffC:** I think I've shown it to you before Sandra... but Josh hasn't seen it: <http://snurl.com/netc1>

**SandraS:** Jeff, that sounds cool

**JeffC:** it was... probably my biggest success in teaching.

**DavidW** smiles

**SandraS:** why do you think it was so successful?

**JeffC:** well... there were a lot of elements.

**SandraS** listens to Jeff

**JeffC:** basically... having them write an autobiographical incident (a standard at the time)... knowing that I'd be putting it out to 27 international schools.

**JeffC:** these were students from all over the world... Thai refugee camps, Mexico, Central America, Laos, etc.

**JeffC:** so... they had something to say.

**SandraS:** so students wrote knowing they'd have a wide and diverse audience

**JeffC:** trouble is that they had extremely low skills and self-esteem as far as their writing, especially the ESL students.

**JoshuaJD:** They always like to write about themselves too

**JeffC:** right... but more importantly was getting them to draw upon their own lives.

**JeffC:** exactly

**SandraS** nods to Joshua

**SandraS:** and I think that just the act of writing to others helps build self-esteem in writing

**JeffC:** my students were published more than any others... not because of their writing skills... but because of their stories.

**JeffC:** and yes... that's what led to my own little pedagogy: facilitation--validation--motivation--collaboration.

**SandraS:** cool!

**JeffC:** we used Bay Area Writing Project guidelines... but basically it was all about getting the kids to know that what they had to say was important.

**JoshuaJD:** grate for you!

**JoshuaJD:** great

**JeffC:** the fact that they were published got them doing more... so yeah... it was something that worked.

**SandraS:** that's true for almost all students...getting them to believe their thoughts and words are important

**JeffC:** that's what really got me started with the Net... and the article launches into other tools, etc.

**SandraS:** and writing is a great tool for nurturing that

**JeffC:** yup

**JoshuaJD:** I agree I think they need to enjoy the topic enough and if they know it will get

published I think it will give the writing more meaning to them

**SandraS:** yes. and then if you use blogs, for instance, writers can get instant feedback through the comments

**SandraS:** With our project, we've got students working in groups on Google Docs

**JoshuaJD:** feedback is important in all subject areas and immediate feedback is always good

**SandraS:** Joshua, do you know Google Docs?

**JoshuaJD:** No I don't

**SandraS:** <http://docs.google.com>

**SandraS:** it's basically an online word processing program...and much more

**SandraS:** Word online...and you can share the document.

**SandraS:** you invite someone via email and that person can access the document online

**SandraS:** and can comment

**SandraS:** edit

**SandraS:** so we've got two students from Alabama and two from Nebraska working in one group

**SandraS:** it's pretty cool

**SandraS:** I'm already seeing a lot of excitement

**JoshuaJD:** oh yeah. I actually just saw that through the grad class I am taking right now

**JoshuaJD:** That is pretty cool

**SandraS:** students are eager to work together, to find out about each other

**SandraS:** When they write their "This I Believe" essays, they will also submit them to NPR

**JoshuaJD:** so you do use that in your classroom

**SandraS:** yes, I do

**SandraS:** just started using it this year

**SandraS:** it tracks all the revisions

**JoshuaJD:** do you have computers in your room?

**SandraS:** nope

**SandraS:** I ask students to share each document with me, so i get to see what's going on in the groups

**JoshuaJD:** Do you do any written drafts or only online

**SandraS:** I do a combination

**SandraS:** both

**JoshuaJD:** I see

**SandraS:** We've just started the project, so I'm curious to see what will happen.

**SandraS:** The teacher in Nebraska and I are also writing our own This I Believe essays

**SandraS:** It's quite a challenging assignment

**SandraS:** but the website has a LOT of essays available

**JoshuaJD:** We don't do any writing on the computer. It's a shame I wish we could but we only have 30 minutes a week on the computer.

**SandraS:** and you can listen to the authors' podcasts of their essays

**JoshuaJD:** that's pretty cool

**SandraS:** Do students have access at home?

**SandraS:** My students do most of their work on the computer outside of class.

**JoshuaJD:** Some of them do. I do teach in the inner city and most of them do not. That's why I wish we could have more access to computers.

**SandraS:** That would be great. I wonder if there's any kind of one-on-one laptop program available?

**SandraS:** I know there have been teachers in the National Writing Program that have written about being in classrooms with 1-to-1 laptop

**SandraS:** pretty amazing to have all students with their own laptops

**SandraS:** Joshua, is there anything else you'd like to discuss this evening?

**JoshuaJD:** Actually I have to go, but I had a great time and hopefully I will get to chat with you all soon! thanks a lot

**SandraS:** I really appreciate your coming by

**BjB:** the next writetalk discussion will be on November 8

**SandraS:** Thanks for participating!

**SandraS:** Thanks for a great discussion, folks!

**DavidW:** Thanks, Sandra

**SandraS** bows to BJ, David, and Jeff

**BjB:** Thanks, Sandy

**SandraS:** Take care and have a good evening!

**SandraS** jumps on her hoverboard and whooshes off