

Title of Session: AAMU Writing Project

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SandraS joined the room.

SandraS: Hi, everybody

BrianCR: Thank you.

SandraS: hey, bj

BrianCR: Hi, I don't want to bother anyone, I was hoping to just sit and watch quietly.

BJ: Hi, Sandy

SandraS: I'm a couple minutes late. I apologize.

BJ: we're glad you're here!

SandraS: Maybe we could start by introducing ourselves?

SandraS: I'll start

SandraS: I'm Sandy Shattuck, professor in English at Alabama A&M University

SandraS: member of the A&M Writing Project and facilitator for this meeting. Next?

BJ: I'm a teacher in Pennsylvania and a helpdesk volunteer for Tapped In BrianCR: I'm

Brian from San Diego, I'm a teacher, and just here to watch. :)

SandraS: Hi, Brian

BrianCR: Hi

SandraS: Audrey and Trina, would you like to introduce yourselves?

SandraS: Brian, what do you teach?

SusanCl joined the room.

SandraS: Hi, Susan

SusanCl: hi -- i went to the wrong room

SandraS: Here's one of the participants of the A&M Writing Project

SandraS: I did too, Susan

SandraS: totally forgot we were here!

SusanCl: good - i don't feel so bad

SandraS: Brian, who is a middle school social studies teacher from San Diego, is visiting.

SandraS: I checked Brian's info!

SandraS: Hi Maria!!!

SusanCl: ok

SandraS: Brian, do you know anything about the National Writing Project?

SandraS: Maybe I'll say a little bit as people start to gather here.

BrianCR: Oh wow, I'll have to figure out how to do that... um, no I don't... :)

SandraS: To get info on someone, just select their name in the Here box to the left and then click on the green i icon below...

BrianCR: Ah, just figured it out. Thanks. :)

SandraS: great

SandraS: Just quickly, The National Writing Project started in 1973.

SandraS: Jump in Susan if you think of anything to add.

SandraS: It started at UC Berkeley and has been federally and state funded since then.

SusanCl: gosh, you probably know more about it than I do
SandraS: Today, there are 175 sites nationally.
SandraS shakes her head
SandraS: I just read the book and website!!!!
SusanCl: did you get time to read my story?
SandraS: The premise is that writing is a way of learning, that it should be taught in all subject areas, that teachers teach writing best when they learn how to write well, and that teachers are the best teachers of other teachers.
SandraS: Could I get the word "teach" in there one more time?
SandraS: Susan, I've started your story but haven't finished. I'm interested in getting to the end.
SusanCl: cool, I'm glad it's got your interest
SandraS: Brian, we just finished a 4-week summer institute and we did a lot of writing.
SandraS: are you working on anything else, Susan?
BrianCR: Thanks, that really helps.
SusanCl: sort of, but I really need some outside pressure to produce SandraS: I know the feeling....
BrianCR: All that makes sense to me. :)
SandraS: Susan, do you want to tell Brian what we're doing here?.... SusanCl: Brian- do they have a writing assessment in ca
BJ wants to know too :-)
SandraS Sandy wants to know tooooooo
BrianCR: Hmmm, for school or college?
SusanCl: for k12
BrianCR: Well...
SandraS: the writing assessment for AL is 5th and 8th grade, right?
BrianCR: I'm not sure really...
BrianCR: I haven't encountered it yet.
SusanCl: I think it's fifth and seventh
SandraS: oh, ok
SandraS: ok, so this is what I think we're doing here tonight
SandraS: this is the first online meeting after the summer institute
SandraS: and we're trying to see how we can meet monthly
SandraS: how we might use online meetings to continue the work we started during the summer institute
SandraS: Tapped In is really ideal, because it also offers the opportunity to meet up with other Writing Projects and network nationally
SandraS: BUT our attendance tonight might indicate that meeting online might not work for our group
SandraS: one problem is that it's the night before a holiday
SandraS: and I think a lot of folks are doing things with family
SandraS: I'm going to be quiet now....
SandraS: Susan, do you think a monthly meeting would work for our group?
SusanCl: did anyone send out an email reminding people?
SandraS: I did
SandraS: last week

SusanCl: oh--

SusanCl: well--- what do you want to do?

SusanCl: hang out for awhile?

SandraS: sure

SandraS: one thing i was hoping to do was to talk about the advanced institute

SusanCl: oh yeah--when is that?

SandraS: February

SandraS: then there's a writing retreat in April

SandraS: I really like that there's follow-up after the institute

SusanCl: what all will the advanced institute entail?

SandraS: um, mostly it's to follow-up on the institute

SandraS: provide us a chance to do more writing

SandraS: help us to be more prepared as teaching fellows

SandraS: one of the reasons I asked everyone to commit to writing a pedagogy journal was so that we could use that at the institute

SandraS: what would you find most useful at the institute? as a follow-up to the summer stuff

SusanCl: I am not sure I remember talking about a pedagogy journal-- could you explain that for me?

SandraS: it kinda got lost in the last day

SandraS: I was trying to set things up for the advanced institute

SusanCl: what does it need to cover and how does it need to be laid out?

SandraS: well, one thing I'd like to know is if folks integrated any of the tips they learned

SandraS: did teachers develop new ideas for the classroom as a result of the summer institute?

SandraS: how have participants' view of themselves as teachers, as writers, as teachers of writing changed

SandraS: been affected by the summer institute

SandraS: I was thinking that a writing pedagogy journal would help folks focus their thoughts

SandraS: write down challenges, successes, frustrations, milestones in their teaching

SandraS: since the Advanced Institute will be in February, we could have the whole fall to write the journals

SandraS: take some time in January to re-read them and reflect

SandraS: and then bring those reflections to the Advanced Institute

SandraS: does that sound feasible or helpful in any way?

SusanCl: it would be good to keep a log of what you're doing and how you implement it so you can tweak it later

SandraS: right, that's what I was thinking

SandraS: also, let's say someone uses Symmetris' semester-long project

SandraS: I would think it would be cool for Symmetris to find out how that project worked for someone else

SandraS: or if someone used your fairy tale project

SusanCl: I was going to try to adapt Kim's abc of me for my 9th

SandraS: would be cool to talk about different experiences

SandraS: right,

SandraS: I was thinking about that for college
SandraS: I'm thinking really that my college classes really need that authentic audience
SusanCl: that would be a sneaky way to get them to keep a portfolio
SandraS: ooh, great idea
SandraS: hadn't thought about that
SandraS: how would you adapt Kim's project to 9th grade?
SandraS: oh yeah, she used it for 9th grade
SusanCl: the biggest obstacle I see is time, since we are on the 4x4 block
SandraS: ok, you have to explain that to me
SusanCl: the classes only last for 18 weeks
SandraS: that's one semester?
SandraS: what does "4x4 block" mean?
SusanCl: yes -- an not enough time to do much developmentally
SandraS: that means you have one English class for one semester not a whole year?
SusanCl: 4x4 means they take 4 classes (96min) each semester- two cores and two electives
SusanCl: yes to the one semester
SandraS: is the idea to give more intensive instruction?
SandraS: or more in-depth instruction?
SusanCl: that's what they say, but it doesn't work that way
SandraS: yeah, because what happens the 2nd semester?
SandraS: do certain subjects get dropped?
SusanCl: yeah -- you'd take a math and English one semester and your science and social studies next semester
SandraS: really bad idea
SusanCl: then you have 2 electives each semester
SandraS: I can't imagine just doing English or math or science -- or any of it just one semester
SusanCl: the reason I got involved in the writing project was to try and figure out how to get everything in to my 18 weeks and still prep them for the exit exam
SandraS: sounds kinda impossible?
SandraS: especially if the exit exam is in the spring
SusanCl: it's not a good system, because most all we have time to do is prep for the test
BrianCR: Is there a website where I could go to find out more about the NWP and how to get involved?
SandraS: absolutely
SandraS: <http://www.writingproject.org>
SusanCl: cool
SandraS: i think it's hotlinked
SandraS: so you can just go to the site
BrianCR: Thank you very much!
SandraS: and here's our site website
SandraS: <http://www.knology.net/~aamuwritingproject>
SandraS: Brian, I'm pretty sure there's at least a couple sites in your area
SandraS: the writing project sites are always at a university and linked up with k-12 schools

BrianCR: Ah, thank you.

SandraS: but the summer institutes can only have one college person

SandraS: the rest are all k-12

SandraS: and there's a real push to get different disciplines

SandraS: one of the really interesting things I learned is that math teachers can be really big on writing

SandraS: for instance the national council of mathematics teachers have lots of guidelines for teaching math through writing

SusanCl: Brian-- are you on the block schedule or regular sched at your school

BrianCR: I taught a block last semester. A two hour humanities block.

BrianCR: But this coming semester I'm trying to get a job teaching 6th grade social studies.

BrianCR: I'm not a strong language arts teacher. :)

SandraS: good luck!

SandraS: AHA!

SandraS: that's a big part of the discussion at the writing project

SandraS: most teachers actually teach writing without even really knowing it

SusanCl: you really don't have to be strong grammatically - it's really using words to communicate sensibly

SandraS: exactly

SusanCl: you might want to try working in tandem with the language arts people

SandraS: See, this is why I love this technology.

SusanCl: you could have a short research paper that you could grade together

BrianCR: True... but in Humanities... which is history and language arts... you have to assess language arts standards... and I'm not good at it... in fact I don't like it. :) I love to write and have so all my life, but I never liked English as a subject. :)

SandraS: right now we're talking about the block schedule and how it helps/hinders teaching

SandraS: teaching of writing

BrianCR: I worked with a language arts teacher, we team taught. I loved it, it's just the language arts side where I'm weak.

SandraS: wow, team teaching can be great

SandraS: Brian, when you say you're weak in language arts, what do you mean?

BrianCR: I'm a classic History teacher. I am a terrible speller, have no clue what a semi-colon is for, and my handwriting leaves a lot to be desired. :)

SusanR, did you team teach with another language arts person or another discipline?

SusanCl: but I was thinking that the grammatical skills could be assessed by the l.a. tch and that you could assess content and organizational stuff, Brian SusanR: we grouped our students according to ability... language groups BrianCR: Yeah, that's how we divided things mostly.

BrianCR: Well, my wife is calling, so I must be off.

SusanCl: nice talking to you Brian

BrianCR: Thank you very much for letting me observe and even chat a little with you.

SandraS: thanks, Brian

SusanCl: hey Sandy-- I need to go also

SandraS: ok, Susan, talk to you soon

BrianCR: I'm going to check out the NWP in my area and see what I find. I'd really like to be a stronger writer myself. :)

BrianCR: Thank you and goodnight!