

Title of Session: AAMU WriteTalk
Moderator: Sandra Shattuck
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BjB: Welcome to tonight's WriteTalk discussion. Sandra Shattuck is our discussion leader. We usually start with introductions

BjB: I'm an art teacher in Pennsylvania

SandraS: Hi, I'm an English teacher in Alabama

ShirleyB: I'm a part-time person with the National Writing Project.

SusanR: I am a K to 8 Occasional Teacher in Ontario, Canada

MarshaR: Hi I'm a District Coordinating Teacher in Kansas

ShirleyB: I used to be an English teacher with a program for pregnant and parenting teens

SandraS: Criselda, Gloria, and Jeff?

GloriaMF: Hi, I am a University of Houston student.

CriseldaG: I'm a reading methods teacher at the University of Texas Pan American in Edinburg, Texas

SandraS: Jeff works helpdesk here and works on educational technology

SandraS: ok, wonderful group

SandraS: what I'd like to do tonight is to spend 15 minutes talking about the National Writing Project

SandraS: and then we'll talk about your specific writing challenges

SandraS: if no one has anything current they'd like feedback on, then

SandraS: I'd like to talk about feedback in general

ShirleyB: I'm curious about the process here

ShirleyB: Do people usually share a draft?

SandraS: sometimes we do Shirley

SandraS: we've done a variety of things

SandraS: let me do my NWP intro

SandraS: which you can add to

ShirleyB: Ok

SandraS: I'd like to introduce you formally right after I do the intro

SandraS: since some people here don't know about NWP

SandraS: ok, so National Writing project is a professional development federally- and state-funded

SandraS: program that's been around for 30 years

SandraS: premises: 1) teachers are the best teachers of other teachers

SandraS: 2) teachers teach writing if they work on their own writing

SandraS: 3) writing can be used in any discipline to facilitate learning

SandraS: NWP has about 185 sites nationally

SandraS: each site is hosted at a university, but the primary participants are K-12 teachers

SandraS: I participated in a Summer Invitational Institute last summer

SandraS: at Alabama A&M University, where I teach

SandraS: the summer institute usually lasts 4 weeks

SandraS: teachers are paid a stipend to attend

ShirleyB: No always

SandraS: we work on writing, teaching demos, discussing the curriculum

SandraS: ah, thanks Shirley

ShirleyB: not always --sometimes they just get credits

SandraS: ok, so I'll ask Shirley to introduce herself and let us know exactly what she does in NWP

ShirleyB: I apologize I didn't mean to interrupt.

ShirleyB: You were doing a great job.

ErikaV joined the room.

SandraS: no problem... I was winding down on my NWP spiel

ShirleyB: Most of my work with the NWP is with online events - the E-Anthology, Authors and Issues

BjB: Hi, Erika. Welcome

ShirleyB: The E-Anthology is available to summer institute folks to post their writings on line and get feedback.

ShirleyB: Hi Erika.

SandraS waves to Erika

SandraS: Shirley, can you explain Authors and issues?

ShirleyB: I'm rotating off as co-chair of the Teacher Inquiry Communities Network (teacher research)

SandraS: ok, so the other thing I think is really important about the NWP is that teachers' voices come first

SandraS: well, right after student voices

SandraS: but I think the whole program is set up to ensure that educational reform occurs within schools, not from outside

SandraS: would you agree, Shirley?

ShirleyB: Authors and Issues is a special event where we have an author(s) posting and responding to questions on line. We've had Donald Murray, Ralph Fletcher, Jeffrey Wilhelm and Tanya Baker and Jane Zeni.

SandraS: very cool

ShirleyB: I absolutely agree. the NWP recognizes teacher knowledge.

SandraS: Shirley, if it's ok with you, I'd like to talk a little about the writing retreat I just attended, and then we can get to everyone's writing...

SandraS: is everyone still with us?

ShirleyB: Sounds perfect.

BjB nods

GloriaMF: Yes

ErikaV: ok

SusanR: yes

SandraS: excellent...

SandraS: I just got back from Santa Fe and an idyllic setting

SandraS: where the NWP holds 2 writing retreats each summer

SandraS: this retreat was for writers with pretty finished drafts

SandraS: it was a really wonderful experience
SandraS: I had a paper that I had given in May at the Rhetoric Society of America
SandraS: it was a paper on using weblogs (blogging) in the classroom
SandraS: I had a response group of two other teachers
SandraS: and I had access to 3 editors
SandraS: I used everybody
SandraS: but by Friday night, I was completely confused about what I was really writing
SandraS: then I realized that my paper was at best a second draft
SandraS: and one of the editors was talking about the difference between
SandraS: experienced and inexperienced writers
SandraS: experienced writers know that most pieces of writing take 7-13 drafts, about
SandraS: and that each piece of writing needs to be read by at least 3 people
SandraS: so on Saturday, I complained to my response group
SandraS: got some things clarified
SandraS: and started a completely new rewrite
SandraS: it was a great experience
SandraS: and I open with that to introduce the topic of feedback
SandraS: how do we each proceed with our ideas? how do we get feedback on our drafts?
SandraS: so why don't we go around the room...cyberspacially...and talk about writing that we're doing...where are we stuck?...and about feedback that we get.
SandraS: Anyone want to start?
BjB: wow! I would think all that feedback could be pretty overwhelming to a novice writer
SandraS: very good point
SandraS: I find that happens in some of my writing classes
SandraS: but in fact the larger problem is simply getting students to give feedback
SandraS: instead of just saying "very nice. I liked it."
SandraS: who here would be overwhelmed by having 3-4 people read a piece of your writing?
ShirleyB: We've been working on this in the E-Anthology.
BjB: o O (it had a good beat?)
GloriaMF: Yeah most people try to be polite and not give the real feedback on your paper, How can you eliminate this?
SandraS: chuckles at BJs wit
SandraS: ok, great... two things.
SandraS: first, Shirley, can you expand on the problem with e-anthology?
SandraS: then we'll get to Gloria's question
ShirleyB: Someone prepared guidelines for responding and placed the burden on the author. She/he has say what he/she wants addressed.
SandraS: so the author is helping the reader to read and respond specifically...
ShirleyB: In the E-Anthology, we're trying to encourage people to give feedback that is helpful.
ShirleyB: Yes, I'd say that's a good way of saying it, Sandra.
SandraS: so one way I encourage this with student writing is to ask students to respond to 3 questions on the front of their paper

SandraS: 1. what's your main point

SandraS: 2. what problems are you having

SandraS: 3. what would you do if you had more time

ShirleyB: good questions

SandraS: i also ask writers to identify audience and purpose

SandraS: the questions don't magically get the readers to be more proficient

SandraS: but it's a start

GloriaMF: Helps them focus there paper.

SandraS: so Gloria's question was along the same lines

SandraS: right, Gloria.

GloriaMF: yes

SandraS: helps writer to consider his/her writing more

SandraS: are you talking more about your own writing or student writing?

SandraS: basically you were asking...how do you get through the "polite factor"?

GloriaMF: yes

SandraS: because there are times when writers also get destructive input

SandraS: so there's a balance

SandraS: to encourage but also be specific

GloriaMF: yes, there is

SandraS: one woman at the retreat said that she writes with 2 writing groups

SandraS: and they're basically fan clubs for each other

CriseldaG: I think people in general appreciate objective feedback

SandraS: so it was refreshing to come some place where people asked her specific questions about her writing

SandraS: I agree, Criselda

SandraS: but a lot of writers don't react objectively.....

SandraS: cuz we sometimes confusing writing with self.... I think...

CriseldaG: That's why I think using a rubric can be effective to reference when providing feedback

SandraS: and readers often feel they're being impolite if they give objective feedback

SandraS: absolutely, Criselda. do you have experience using a rubric to address this issue?

MarshaR: I agree when people ask questions, it helps you think about what you could do

CriseldaG: The rubric is separate from the writer and reviewer

ShirleyB: Aren't rubrics more useful for evaluation (grading) than for developing a piece of writing?

SandraS: ooh, cool question, Shirley

CriseldaG: Yes, I have created various rubrics for the course that I teach. I think that rubrics are for evaluating, but can be used for the process as the final product is the final draft

SandraS: so Criselda, you'd agree that rubrics are more helpful towards the end stages of the writing process?

ShirleyB: I guess I associate feedback with drafts.

CriseldaG: In other words, rubrics represent the final outcome and we use it as a measure of where we are

SandraS: ok, so feedback goes with drafts --- rubrics goes with final draft

SandraS: am I representing that correctly, Griselda and Shirley?

SandraS: Marsha said something I like...."ask questions"

CriseldaG: Yes Sandra, and what I'm suggesting is that we can reference it during the process itself

SandraS nods

GloriaMF: With the rubrics are you evaluating your writing?

ShirleyB: Yes and no. Many people think that any piece is always in process. But, I realize that's side-stepping the issue. Even published pieces get feedback in the form of reviews.

CriseldaG: I agree Shirley

SandraS: I agree with Shirley....

ShirleyB: I think asking the right questions is critical in feedback.

SandraS: yes, that's where I think we can help our students and ourselves

ShirleyB: I agree.

SandraS: good feedback is as much the skill of listening to one's own reading voice as anything else

GloriaMF: I agree

SandraS: you know, when you read a draft and you feel yourself shrug internally

SandraS: or cock your head

SandraS: or knit your brow

SandraS: those are the moments we need to make manifest

SandraS: so the writer can get what Peter Elbow calls

SandraS: movies of our mind

SandraS: a movie of our reading mind

SandraS: which I like, because the reader isn't correcting the writer

SandraS: simply telling the writer how the writing affects the reader

SandraS: the writing will affect different readers differently

ShirleyB: the reader or the writer has movies of the mind?

SandraS: it's Elbow's way of trying to teach readers how to talk about what they've read, I think

SandraS: so, I'm reading a text

SandraS: stuff is going on inside my mind as I read

SandraS: it would be like having a camera record those thoughts

SandraS: and then the feedback would be playing back the film

SandraS: does that make any sense at all?

GloriaMF: yes it does

CriseldaG: Yes!

ShirleyB nods

SandraS: pretty clear example of how reading/writing are inextricably linked

SandraS: this is not stuff i have figured out by any means

SandraS: I'm currently trying to figure out how to help my students become more skilled readers of their peers' work

SandraS: so that they can become better writers/readers themselves

SandraS: ok, I feel like I'm talking too much

CriseldaG: But that's absolutely how it works

SandraS nods

SandraS: anybody have any writing they're thinking about, writing, drafting, revising, planning?

SandraS: any classroom strategies you want to brainstorm?

ShirleyB: One thing we haven't mentioned, particularly in regard to students, is one's investment in the writing.

SandraS: absolutely

SandraS: you want to expand on that, Shirley?

ShirleyB: I wonder if feedback is only effective when the writer really wants to develop a piece.

SandraS: aha!

SandraS: wow

SandraS: you may have answered a huge question for me

SandraS: if students see writing as a finished draft for grade, then why develop ways of giving and receiving feedback?

MarshaR: But what if the writer was lost

ShirleyB: I think that's a huge question in the classroom. How do we help students find a subject they're passionate about?

ShirleyB: Marsha, could you say more?

SandraS: I think the definition of writing is being lost..... a couple times a minute

MarshaR: What if they were writing to learn about something and they just were trying to find their way to the answer?

SandraS: wouldn't feedback serve to help the writer make the journey?

GloriaMF: I would think so

ShirleyB: I would think so.

SandraS: I think you've just described the writing process, Marsha

MarshaR: In writing to learn is that the function of feedback?

SandraS: I think so

SandraS: first drafts are very much writer-centered or writer-focused

SandraS: very much working stuff out

SandraS: not until you get to later drafts does your writing turn more to your readers

CriseldaG: Yes, I agree

SandraS: you work the draft more clearly to convey the point you've worked out through earlier writing

SandraS: so, there's a whole continuum of feedback

MarshaR: How would your feedback not "give away" the "answer" and still allow the writer to discover it for themselves? Allow the experience of the writing to discover it?

SandraS: again, Elbow talks about the most basic type of feedback

SandraS: simply listening to a piece, no comment

MarshaR: ?

SandraS: Marsha, I think it goes back to the questions

ShirleyB: Are we making assumptions that every writer needs to write multiple drafts?

SandraS: what questions does the reader have as she/he reads the piece?

SandraS: right, that's an assumption I'm making

SandraS: but that's not always the case, eh?

SandraS: ok, let's talk about the kinds of feedback that works for us

SandraS: let's take a hypothetical situation

SandraS: we each have in our hands a first draft of a piece on professional writing
SandraS: that is, writing about our profession, teaching
SandraS: think for a minute what that piece might be....
SandraS: let's try a quick collective writing
SandraS: just write down whatever comes to mind.
ShirleyB: Now?
SandraS: I'm writing a piece on my teaching practices and it's about using blogging instead of journaling in the classroom.
SandraS: Yup.
SandraS: Doesn't have to be anything you're actually writing.
ShirleyB: Should we respond to your topic? Create our own?
SandraS: Just think...what would you like to write if you could?
SandraS: totally, create your own
ShirleyB: gotcha
SandraS: you can make it up, if you want.....
ShirleyB: How could we persuade the public that NCLB is anti-education?
SandraS: big topic.....
SandraS: anybody else?
BjB: I'm writing on a piece that describes how isolated a teacher can be and how TI frees you
SandraS: cool, BJ
ShirleyB: TI is?
CriseldaG: I'm writing about using online environment to promote critical thinking skills for teacher candidates
SandraS: Tapped In
SandraS: also way cool, Criselda
GloriaMF: I'm writing about how technology helps teachers in their teaching.
SandraS: wonderful stuff, Gloria
MarshaR: I'd write about how to use constructivist methods in programming a virtual environment with bots that interact in an environment using the elements of culture.
SandraS loves bots so much
BjB: Jeff works on writing about Teacher collaboration
SandraS: ok, so each of you think about what kind of feedback you'd like and how you would get it
SandraS: if you've already gotten feedback, tell us how you got it and how effective it was
SandraS: if you haven't yet gotten the feedback you want, tell us what kind of feedback you want.
SandraS: I can start.
SandraS: got lots of feedback at the retreat
SandraS: but I only have 2 pages of the rewrite.
SandraS: I need folks to read the revision when it's done
BjB: can you post it to the group room, Sandy?
ShirleyB: Since I'm not writing the piece yet, I would want lots of talk about my proposed topic.
SandraS thought BJ would never ask...

SandraS: cool...

SandraS: no one has yet brought an idea to WriteTalk

SandraS: but that's what it's designed for

SandraS: a writer can bring an idea

SandraS: and just talk about it

ShirleyB: What's WriteTalk?

SandraS: as a way to brainstorm, clarify

SandraS: we're in WriteTalk right now

ShirleyB: Nice

SandraS: that's what this session is called...designed to support professional writing

ShirleyB: Is it also on Tapped In?

SandraS: by members of TI

SandraS: exactly, WriteTAlk only takes place on TI

ShirleyB: Oops---sorry.

SandraS: no problem, Shirley,

JeffC: lol

SandraS: not always easy to negotiate these spaces

JeffC: I'm actually working on an online course for PBS now that involves learning communities... and an article for the course discusses collaboration, learning communities, and overcoming teacher isolation.

SandraS: you're currently working on the article?

ShirleyB: All of these topics are so interesting.

SandraS agrees with Shirley

JeffC: yeah... I just have copied a few of the salient quotes into Word... like to see some of them?

MarshaR: Narrowing them seems to me to be a big part of writing about them

ShirleyB: Jeff and Sandra, could you share your articles?

SandraS: sure....

JeffC: (these wouldn't be my points... from the article)

ShirleyB: Yes, Let's see,

SandraS: the way to share writing is to post it in the group room

SandraS: that's the AAMU WP room for Alabama A&M Writing Project room

JeffC: The literature on professional learning communities repeatedly gives attention to five attributes of such organizational arrangements: supportive and shared leadership, collective creativity, shared values and vision, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice

ShirleyB: Yikes, there are so many new conventions.

SandraS: if you join the group, you can then post your writing there

SandraS: Nice quote, Jeff.

SandraS: Can you tell us what kind of feedback you've gotten so far?

SandraS: And if it's helped you with the writing?

SandraS: And what kind of feedback you're looking for?

JeffC: factors that support learning communities: time to meet and talk, small school size and physical proximity of the staff to one another, interdependent teaching roles, well-developed communication structures, school autonomy, and teacher empowerment.

SandraS: Jeff, would you be willing to post the article to the group room?

JeffC: OK... those are two quotes... basically they're not controversial imho... pretty obvious... but also usually 180 degrees away from what really goes on in school.

JeffC: If I can... I'm linked to it in the course now... I don't have the URL offhand... will try to get it.

SandraS: What would help me as a reader is to know what kind of feedback you'd like.

SandraS: So when I post my piece (which won't be for another week or so) I'll post my questions or what I'd like you to focus on.

JeffC: The bottom line is: If good things happen in schools... teachers collaborate, have time to do so... good things happen (like they're doing in Japan now). Unfortunately... we teach in America... and best practice seems to go out the window.

MarshaR: You know Jeff, the DOE had some pretty good chats on Charter Schools. Lots of these topics came up in those chats. I'd bet you could get lots of info harvested from those chats. If you need more I still have transcripts in my email archives somewhere if you're interested.

SandraS: great networking....

SandraS: ok, we're at the end of the hour.

JeffC: sure Marsha... jc@JeffCooper.info

SusanR . o O (those factors represent an ideal learning and teaching environment)

SandraS: let me just close by saying thanks to everyone for participating

ShirleyB: Thanks for letting me join in. This is a great group.

SandraS: and give a special bow to Shirley Brown, from the NWP

ShirleyB: ;blushes

BjB applauds and whistles for Shirley

CriseldaG: Thanks to everyone

SandraS: I'll post a summary to the list

ShirleyB: Thanks.

BjB: Thanks, Sandy. This was great as always

SandraS: so please be sure to join AAMU WP

SandraS: and you'll get the email

SandraS: Thanks!!!

SandraS: I always learn a lot.

ShirleyB: Now I have to join the group. I'll see if I can figure it out.

MarshaR: Thank you it was so much fun and I learned so much. I hope I can come back.

BjB: directions for joining the aAMU group:

SusanR . o O (many ideas to consider, Shirley and Sandra.)

JeffC: <http://www.sedl.org/> volume 6 number 1 (from 1997) is the article... I haven't found the direct link yet.

BjB: click on SEARCH

BjB: click on GROUPS

ShirleyB: Bye!

BjB: enter AAMU Writing Project

BjB: click on the name of the group next to the green i

BjB: and then JOIN THIS GROUP

SandraS: Thanks for the directions, BJ!

SandraS jumps on her hoverboard and whooshes off

ShirleyB: I did it. I'm a groupie.

BjB waves goodnight