Title of Session: WriteTalk
Moderator: Sandra Shattuck
Title of File: 20050113writetalk
Date: January 13, 2005

Room: After School Online Room

AndrewJM joined the room.

SandraS: Hi, Andrew.

SandraS: How are you this evening?

AndrewJM: Hello - I came to participate in the after school online program...

SandraS: great

SandraS: I'm just reading your info

SandraS: and thinking you need to lead a session on waypoint, if you haven't already

SandraS: looks fascinating

AndrewJM: Thanks! Mark suggested the same thing. I came tonight to check out how the AS programs work. How do I get into the session?

SandraS: you're in it!

BJ smiles

SandraS: just check the Tapped In calendar to see what you attend

AndrewJM: D'oh!

SandraS: some After School Online sessions take place here

SandraS: or in the Hot Tub Conference Room

SandraS: or other conference rooms

SandraS: for instance, right now, we have 3 sessions going on, I think

BJ: this is the discussion you want to participate in, Andrew

AndrewJM: The '10 mistakes' discussion?

AndrewJM: Yes.

SandraS: right!

BJ: the other discussion going on right now is for preservice teachers

AndrewJM: I don't know what that is:)

SandraS: anyone pursuing education degree and doing teaching

BJ: student teachers

AndrewJM: I used to subscribe to Holt Uncensored...but something happened that really annoyed me and I unsubscribed. It's funny, I can't remember what ticked me off so much.

SandraS: there ya go

SandraS: ah...too bad. I would have been interested.

AndrewJM: Ah! I'm only an amateur student at this point.

SandraS: actually, we're not going to talk about the 10 mistakes this evening...

AndrewJM: So...9 mistakes?

SandraS: I decided to jettison it for tonight and just see where folks are, what they want to talk about

SandraS: usually, we begin with introductions

AndrewJM: Ah! Cool.

SandraS: I'm Sandy. I teach English in Alabama

BJ: I'm an art teacher in Pennsylvania

SandraS . o O (BJ may be flitting back and forth since she's facilitating a couple sessions)

SandraS: Andrew, you want to introduce yourself?

AndrewJM: I'm reading your info...

AndrewJM: Sure...

SandraS: ah....

AndrewJM: It's really nice that so many people include pictures.

SandraS: I agree

AndrewJM: Are you 5 or do you wear glasses?

SandraS: LOL

SandraS: depends on what day it is

AndrewJM: I teach freshman English at Drexel University in Philadelphia.

SandraS: so you and BJ are neighbors

AndrewJM: I graduated from Drexel with an engineering degree and worked for 5 years at General Electric.

AndrewJM: Yes - closer than AL anyway!

SandraS: I love the combination of engineering & English

SandraS: OK, Andrew, I'm going to give a quick spiel, and then we'll all talk about writing

SandraS: WriteTalk is sponsored by the Alabama A&M Writing Project

SandraS: which is part of the National Writing Project

AndrewJM: Great.

SandraS: http://www.writingproject.org

SandraS: The National Writing Project (NWP) is federally and state funded

SandraS: started in 1973 at Berkeley as a professional development program

SandraS: today, there are about 185 sites

SandraS: the sites are located at colleges

SandraS: and service mostly k-12 teachers

SandraS: there are 3 basic tenets behind the NWP

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

SandraS: 2) writing helps learning across all subjects

SandraS: 3) teachers use writing better in their classrooms if they improve their own writing

SandraS: the core of each WP site is the invitational summer institute

SandraS: teachers from the area get together for a couple weeks

SandraS: and there are other projects

SandraS: I started with the NWP in 2003 when I went through the summer institute here

SandraS: I found the philosophy invigorating

SandraS: so I wanted to continue here

SandraS: and thought we needed a place to share our professional writing

SandraS: NWP encourages its teachers to publish their experiences

SandraS: so here we are

SandraS: any questions so far, Andrew?

AndrewJM: That's a great overview...I have heard about NWP and read quite a bit, but didn't have such a concise understanding.

SandraS: I'm glad

SandraS: I'm certain lots of folks at NWP would be fascinated to check out waypoint

SandraS: ok, so as someone who's developed rubrics for writing, what is your relationship to writing?

SandraS: what kind of writing do you do?

SandraS: enjoy?

SandraS: detest?

AndrewJM: I talked to the national office early on...and the local folks. Not a lot of interest...

SandraS: ahhh....

SandraS: wonder why...

SandraS: may be because they're federally funded, non-profit

AndrewJM: We've had a lot more luck with curriculum directors at school districts.

SandraS: probably need to stay away from endorsing any particular product

SandraS: so how did you get into doing this?

AndrewJM: Yes...I think there is a suspicion of technology and 'robograders'...

SandraS: right, but your description says it's tailored to each student

AndrewJM: Absolutely!

SandraS: I use rubrics for several of my assignments

SandraS: I love them

AndrewJM: Unless you have 140 students, it is hard to relate to the challenges of being a k-12 teacher.

SandraS: yes, well there are plenty of college teachers with 140 students, all writing essays

AndrewJM: Really? I only see that in people who are adjuncting at several different colleges.

AndrewJM: So what kind of writing do you do (via NWP)?

SandraS: actually, here at Alabama A&M University, I've got colleagues with four ENG 102 (second semester), which includes a research paper

AndrewJM: Yikes! Maybe we should talk about waypoint...:) It started as a productivity tool for teachers.

SandraS: one kind of writing I do with NWP -- last summer I attended a professional writing retreat in Santa Fe and worked on an article on blogging

AndrewJM: Santa Fe! Did you get to 10,000 waves?

SandraS: nope

SandraS: too much writing

AndrewJM: Heh heh.

AndrewJM: So you have a blog?

SandraS: during the summer institute, folks get into response groups

SandraS: um, a couple

SandraS: I've got two class blogs

SandraS: http://sdshattuck.blogspot.com

SandraS: and http://eng304classblog.blogspot.com

SandraS: and I've got space at Typepad

SandraS: http://wordweaver.typepad.com

SandraS: do you use blogs?

BJ: there is also a discussion on blogs [January 21] in Tapped In

SandraS: yeah!

SandraS: thanks for mentioning that BJ

AndrewJM: I used blogs a couple of years ago for student journals...

SandraS: and what was your experience?

AndrewJM: I have moved to having students journal in WebCT because things are organized more effectively - and they are private.

SandraS: right.

SandraS: but one thing that intrigued me about blogs was the public nature of them

SandraS: so writers have a different sense of audience

AndrewJM: I have often thought that it would be cool, as a teacher, to blog on the class...what your thoughts were (as a teacher) on a week's class. Just honestly appraise how things went...

SandraS: and shift all their attention from teacher to world, other students

SandraS: lots of teachers have blogs like

SandraS: that

SandraS: my class blog turns into that often

SandraS: and it changes the dynamic of the class in interesting ways

SandraS: makes me more attentive to my voice, how I teach, how I write

AndrewJM: Whew...not sure I'm brave enough for that. Writing is so private and a conversation with yourself...

SandraS: aha!!!!!

SandraS: interesting....

SandraS: but you teach freshman English

AndrewJM: My 'blog' would turn into a dry discussion rather than my real opinions.

SandraS: so you've got all these folks trying to convince others

SandraS: ah....

SandraS: I dunno

SandraS: there's something about blogging that encourages blathering

SandraS: in a good way

AndrewJM: Yeah...I think I'd blather myself into trouble.

SandraS: certainly using blogs emphasized the social nature of writing

SandraS: here's an example of how I've revised my use of blogs

SandraS: first semester, I asked everyone to get outside readers

SandraS: that was my attempt at authentic audience

SandraS: I got outside readers for my blog

SandraS: I had a friend in rhetoric at Illinois state read my blog and write on it

SandraS: still, it didn't take

AndrewJM: THAT is really cool.

AndrewJM: Oh!

SandraS: then I participated in the NWP Electronic Writing Marathon this past fall

AndrewJM: They didn't get readers?

Jan_NS joined the room.

SandraS: and the folks setting it up

SandraS: had us on a different environment each week

BJ waves hi to Jan

SandraS: we had to write every week and comment on at least 2 of our peers' writings

SandraS: Hi, Jan!

SandraS: so I do that now and it's made a huge difference

SandraS: really helps to shape a community of writers and thinkers

SandraS: Jan, we're a cozy group tonight.

SandraS: Would you like to introduce yourself?

SandraS: And we'll re-introduce ourselves.

Jan_NS: part-time faculty at Univ. of Akron - science methods and instructional technology applications. also doctoral candidate working on my proporal

SandraS: great - Welcome to WriteTalk

SandraS: I teach English/literature at Alabama A&M University

AndrewJM: Hi Jan. I teach freshman English at Drexel in Philadelphia.

Jan_NS: I attended one time back at the very beginning, Sandra. But we facilitate discussions at the same time

Jan_NS: Hi, Andrew

SandraS: Ah! Do you do the preservice discussion?

SandraS: I remember....

SandraS: I've been trying to remember if you talked about your proposal or not...

Jan_NS: yes, I did and then never got the time to come back.

SandraS: Are you here to talk about some professional writing?

Jan_NS: Yes, I am the primary facilitator for preservice.

SandraS: We're talking about using blogs in the classroom right now, but it's an open discussion.

Jan_NS: well, I had no one show. but blogs! yippee. I have been wanting to include blogging for my preservice teachers.

SandraS: great idea!

SandraS: I never thought of that and I have no clue why cuz it's really an ideal group to use blogs with

Jan_NS: I recently read a research article - I can get the file and forward it or post it here if you like.

SandraS: that would be great, Jan

Jan_NS: The results of the research were really not encouraging.

SandraS listens

Jan_NS: over several undergrad. classes, very few of the students became involved with blogging. Most considered it busy work and just did what that had to do for the grade.

SandraS: I've gotta see that article

SandraS: I'm finishing one up now

SandraS: my experience has been a bit different

Jan_NS: I have found that to be true of trying to generate discussion on a discussion board format.

SandraS: I think blogs are much more effective for writing than discussion boards

Jan_NS: hard for students to become self-directed learners and "own" the process.

SandraS: for a couple reasons

SandraS: ah...

SandraS: I struggled at the start

SandraS: do I have one blog for the entire class

SandraS: or separate blogs for each writer

SandraS: I decided on the latter because I wanted each student to have his/her own piece of cyberspace

Jan_NS: I would like the interactivity but I see your point. What were the outcomes?

SandraS: perhaps the most encouraging outcome is the way in which the class as an intellectual and writing community grows

SandraS: several students have mentioned enjoying hearing their peers' viewpoints

SandraS: but I also structure assignments so students have to read each others' work and comment on it

Jan_NS: so they visited each others blogs - could they post too?

SandraS: if the blog is directed solely at the teacher, I would find that stultifying

SandraS: yes

SandraS: they can comment on anyone else's blog

AndrewJM: Got a phone call...I'll be back.

SandraS: and on mine

SandraS: ok Andrew

Jan_NS: cool. what online resource did you use for setting up the blogs

SandraS: another fantastic outcome regards the quiet student in class

SandraS: I use Blogger

SandraS: I tried Tabulas last fall because it has a community journal option

Jan_NS: how did that go?

SandraS: but it's run by one guy and the setup is too complicated

Jan_NS: I have a blog at blogger

SandraS: involves getting emails

SandraS: Blogger has been great.

SandraS: here's my online info for blogging

Jan_NS: but very sparse posting from me - always too busy

SandraS: http://www.english.aamu.edu/~shattuck/blogs.html

Jan_NS: great - thanks

SandraS: I find if I post right after a class, I have a lot to say

SandraS: helps me keep current with class

SandraS: I also comment on students' blogs

SandraS: what were you thinking of for your preservice teachers?

Jan_NS: something similar - some students go through a lot of personal stuff in relationship to using technology and the great number of assignments that they must complete in those classes. I would like them to reflect on their own learning and what they are discovering about themselves in relationship to being a technology user now and in their future classrooms

SandraS: absolutely

SandraS: sounds fantastic

Jan_NS: whew - that was a mouthful.

SandraS: makes sense

SandraS: here's another site

SandraS: http://blogs.writingproject.org/MOOclass

SandraS: that's the blog for the Electronic Writing Marathon

Jan_NS: lots of reluctance to get these students to "reflect" = all their educ. classes require that but they never really get the point.

SandraS: ah...

Jan_NS: that is cool.

SandraS: do you think it's the way the educ. classes ask them to reflect ?

Jan_NS: definitely and that points back at the instructors, most of whom do not get the point either. (imho)

SandraS: I agree

SandraS: it's also not easy to structure assignments so you elicit real reflection

SandraS: that takes thought and care

SandraS: but it's so exciting when it works

SandraS: I think that's why the commenting on each others' blogs has helped students so much

Jan_NS: yes, that is my primary focus with my classes - metacognition and meaningful reflection.

SandraS: by seeing others' thoughts, they begin to reflect on their own

SandraS: the only way to go, I think

Jan_NS: instead of just giving us a "history"

SandraS: right....give the history, then reflect on the history

Jan_NS: lots of the reflections that preservice teachers must do is to reflect on a class that they observed, etc. but they never get to the point of how the story relates to them

SandraS: one thing I've really loved doing with my lit. classes to get students thinking about literature is for them to rewrite a story through the eyes of another character and use first-person

SandraS: ah....

Jan_NS: oh, that is a great idea.

SandraS: I don't know how that would related to preservice

SandraS: but it's a sneaky way of getting students to reflect

SandraS: I'm finding that the more creativity I can use, the more I get students thinking, playing

SandraS: so for instance, we're doing "Sonny's Blues" right now

BJ . o O (what about looking at the class through the eyes of the kids being taught?)

Jan_NS: It would be easy to ask the students to think of how they would teach the lesson, what would they have done.

SandraS: one student after class said, can I make up a character?

SandraS: and I said, Oh yeah!

Jan_NS: oh, that is a great idea.

SandraS: BJ, I really like that idea.

Jan_NS: what a wonderful student to have in a class.

SandraS: yes. but I think most students can think that way when creativity is encouraged.

SandraS: some won't motivate themselves, but many do.

Jan_NS: great idea BJ. I will pass that along to some instructors who have a field experience component.

BJ: might be interesting to have the teacher focus on the kids instead of the teacher

SandraS: also, Jan, it seems like using blogs might take a lot of time

SandraS: oooh, another cool idea

SandraS: so the preservice person observes the kids being instructed rather than the instructor

SandraS: great shift

BJ nods

Jan_NS: that is implied in the reflections assignment but the students are so ego-centered.

SandraS: you know, that would really be great training

SandraS: ah....

SandraS: cuz I take my cues from my students' faces and body language

Jan_NS: I teach that way too. Only way to fly!

SandraS chuckles

SandraS: why do you think that is...the ego-centered stuff?

Jan_NS: Unfortunately, the classes I teach are product oriented. Students learning software, etc.

SandraS: ah...

SandraS: How is your proposal going, Jan?

Jan_NS: seems that the students have difficulty making the shift from seeing everything from their perspective to even consider how it might be for another person in the situation

SandraS: which is probably one of the main causes of ineffective teachers...perhaps

Jan_NS: Part of my research is looking at student cognitive development and stages that occur during young adulthood.

SandraS listens

Jan_NS: and how that is demonstrated in reflective writing

SandraS: very cool

SandraS: if you ever want another reader, I'd be happy to read your proposal at whatever stage it is

Jan_NS: very relevant for college instructors who are moving away from ramming the content.

SandraS: yes...

Jan_NS: that would be great Sandra - I am treading on thin ice in some respects because I am threatening the status quo

SandraS: how so?

Jan_NS: I am looking at university science courses and their instruction in relationship to a conceptual foundation that crosses all areas of science

SandraS: conceptual foundation such as forming hypotheses, for instance?

Jan_NS: most univ. science profs are reluctant to focus very long on anything that does not directly relate to their particular science

Jan_NS: actually "nature of science" which does include how science is done

SandraS: got it

Jan_NS: and a bunch of other major premises.

SandraS: ok, so you were going to tell me about the thin ice?

Jan_NS: most scientists do not realize that for a non-science person, understanding how all areas of science are connected is much more important that just the content alone.

SandraS: makes sense

SandraS: --- sounds like a problem that many disciplines have

Jan_NS: and since most scientists who teach the big introductory courses for non-majors are not teachers at heart.

SandraS: ah...

Jan_NS: they do not step back to see the implications of their approach to instruction for the non-science person

SandraS: ok...and they don't look at teaching as an art

SandraS: art/science

Jan_NS: they memorize the content but do not get the big picture- the students i.e.

SandraS: right

Jan_NS: so there is my thin ice

SandraS: but that's at the basis of so much ineffective teaching, no matter the discipline

SandraS: so what you're doing applies to lots of folks

SandraS: beyond science

SandraS: I would think

Jan_NS: exactly

SandraS: and the thin ice is basically challenging traditional education

SandraS: which focuses on content and not process

Jan_NS: yep

SandraS: if we focused on process, our educational system wouldn't be in the horrible shape it is

SandraS: but let's not get started there, eh?

BJ wonders if perhaps this is a good time to call it a night?

SandraS: so Jan, we're past time, but if

Jan_NS: exactly - I get on my high horse and ride into the sunset at this point

SandraS: I agree BJ

SandraS chuckles

SandraS: Jan, if you want to send me anything

Jan_NS: yep. my dindin is sitting here.

BJ hugs Sandy and Jan. You two are wonderful!

SandraS: send it to sdshattuck@yahoo.com

SandraS: would love to read your stuff

Jan_NS: I will send that journal article.

SandraS: can't wait to read your article BJ!

SandraS: Thanks, Jan.

SandraS: I'll be glad to see it.

Jan_NS: you will find it thought provoking.

SandraS: I'm bettin'

BJ: Hope you found the discussion informative, Andrew

SandraS: hope you both have a restful evening

Jan_NS: Bj - your article.

BJ waves goodnight

Jan_NS: ?

BJ: the one in ENC focus, Jan

SandraS: BJ has an article in

SandraS: thanks BJ

SandraS waves bye

Jan_NS: sorry, Andrew about dominating the latter part of the discussion.

SandraS left the room (signed off).

Jan_NS: night all, see you soon.