Join Community of Writers Online with Donald Murray this Fall

BY JOAN TAYLOR

National Writing Project teacher consultants from across the country will have the opportunity to experiment with online collaboration this fall as they communicate online with noted author and writing teacher Donald Murray.

From September 20 to October 1, NWP teachers are invited to discover once again what it means to be a teacher of writing in a community of writers by meeting with Donald Murray in an online conference to discuss the art and craft as well as the joys and struggles of the writing life. He will share his Daybook Notes and will also respond to selected writing questions from NWP participants.

Donald Murray is perhaps the most often quoted as well as one of the most popular authors among teachers in the NWP network. Last fall, the NWP Design Team surveyed directors about authors and books that were shared during summer institutes. It is not surprising that Donald Murray’s name appeared at the top of the list. In a Spring 1993 article in The Quarterly, entitled “Mozartians, Beethovians, and the Teaching of Writing,” Diane Christian Boehm (Minnesota Writing Project) quoted Murray: “Our job, suggests Donald Murray in Write to Learn is not to teach students how to write, but to teach them how to teach themselves to write.”

Murray has long been a part of NWP summer institutes as a mentor and advisor without actually being present. In a previous article in The Voice (Fall 1996 Vol. 1, No. 2), Fran Simone and Paul Epstein (West Virginia Writing Project) wrote, “Although our teachers had wonderful stories, some of them began the institute as hesitant writers. We were looking for a catalyst, a work we could share that would—like the best literature—allow each of these teacher-writers to take away something he or she needed. We found such a text in Donald Murray’s Write to Learn, a classic of writing education now in its fourth edition.” (Ed. note: now in its sixth edition, 1999.)

Donald Murray uses his Daybook Notes to stimulate his thinking, where he records anything that will move him toward writing. He says he fills one notebook in about six weeks. He then “harvests” that writing to work on an upcoming project and/or for a new daybook.

We hope NWP teacher consultants will take advantage of the wonderful opportunity to join Donald Murray online as he creates a model of a writer at work and invites us to write and create our own models for our writing students.

To learn how to join the conference discussions, go to the National Writing Project homepage http://nwp.berkeley.edu/ and follow the links.

In Write to Learn (Harcourt Brace & Co., 1999), Murray suggests items you might see in his daybook:

- Questions that need to be answered
- Fragments of writing seeking a voice
- Leads, hundreds of leads, the beginning lines of what I may write
- Titles, hundreds of titles
- Notes from which I have made lectures, talks, or speeches
- Notes I have made at lectures, talks, or speeches of others; also notes I have made at poetry readings, hockey games, and concerts
- Outlines
- Ideas for stories, articles, poems, books, papers
- Diagrams showing how a piece might be organized or, more likely showing the relationships between parts of an idea
- Drafts
- Observations
- Quotations from writers or artists
- Newspaper clippings
- Titles of books to be read
- Notes on what I have read
- Pictures I want to save
- Writing schedules
- Pasted-in copies of interesting letters I’ve received or written
- Lists, lots of lists
- Pasted-in handouts I’ve developed for classes or workshops

Murray Bibliography


Writing for Many Roles, Mimi Schwartz, Mary Ann Waters (Contributor), Donald M. Murray (Contributor) (December 1985) Boynton/Cook Pub; ISBN: 0867090979


