Writings on the Wall, Ezine #4/yr 2
Updates – August 26, 2011

Aloha Writing Project Teachers! Things are moving along quite smoothly. Teachers from Kalani High have completed all their testing and just this week we started our observations. See below for additional updates and other items.

Mark your calendar

This Saturday, August 27 is the first, of four, follow up PD sessions. We will meet in the library @ CASTLE HIGH SCHOOL from 8:30am-12:30pm. Refreshments will be provided. PLEASE BRING WITH YOU THE NOTEBOOK YOU RECEIVED AT THE SUMMER INSTITUTE.

Food for Thought

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When Greg McCall was visited this week he was working on a grammar activity with his students.

In Neil Bower’s math classes he had students actively engaged in a review activity. Some students from each team completed a problem on the board independently while the remaining students worked together on different math problems at their seat. He differentiated instruction for students up at the white board by giving them different problems AND allowing them to make choices about if they want a 3 or 2 point question. To increase their team score, students would try to shoot a basket into a box. Everyone was actively engaged and had fun.

As part of her bellwork, Lisa Vegas had her students read the lesson objective and then paraphrase by writing it as an “I can” statement. She has also begun teaching the Writing Traits instructional module, in

The “Write” Stuff

Below are highlights from our recent visits to both Castle and Kalani High Schools.
particular Organization. Students were able to analyze the piece *Chores, Chores, Chores* through guided practice and coaching opportunities by effectively using her aide and skills trainers.

**Elliot Buccat** taught his students how to begin a science journal. At the same time, his students conducted research and learned the importance of writing detailed and precise data notes.

In his history class this week, Thomas Rouse taught a lesson on summarizing while he continued his topic on immigration. He paused several times to engage the students in paired processing and checked for understanding before moving on.

**The More We Know**

**Historical Perceptions of Writing: Study and Teaching of the Writing Process**

In the 1960s and 1970s and 1980s, we saw a new conception of writing emerge, one that came to be called process writing.

Process writing was informed by nascent research and enthusiastically adopted by many teachers in classrooms large and small and throughout the curriculum. Some scholars studied the writing processes of famous authors, while others—Janet Emig and Sondra Perl, Lucy Calkins and Nancie Atwell, Donald Graves and Mina Shaughnessy—learned from students how composing works. These studies and others like them provided a new curriculum for composing located in new practices: invention, drafting, peer review, reflection, revising and rewriting, and publishing. And this new work in composing, in part because it was language-based, supported other scholarly and pedagogical advances of the time. Such an advance is captured in CCCC/NCTE’s 1974 position statement “Students’ Right to Their Own Language,” a document authorizing students as legitimate language users in ways not imagined a mere 20 years before nor obvious to the culture at large, even now. During this time we also saw new assessment practices develop from this process-rich model of composing, most influential among them the portfolio.

At the same time, however, the promise of composing process as developing theory and classroom practice was truncated by several factors, among them two that are related: (1) the formalization of the process itself, into a narrow model suitable for (2) tests designed by a testing industry that too often substitutes a test of grammar for a test of writing and that supports writing, when it does, as an activity permitted in designated time chunks only, typically no more than 35-minute chunks.

**The invention of the personal computer transforms writing.**

But at the same time that writing process was, on the one hand, being theorized, researched, and used to help students write and, on the other hand, being undermined, an invention that would transform writing, education, and life more generally was created: the personal computer (not the network, but simply the box that is the computer). That box, as Richard Lanham has suggested, makes available means of expression beyond pencil, beyond pen, beyond earlier imagination. And what that meant for writers was explained early on, in 1988, by
Pat Sullivan when she identified four changes that computerized composing introduces, all of them beneficial:

Desktop publishing—[which] refers to a computer system that can be used to produce a finished page...—can inspire students to ambitious, creative projects; it can give teachers a means for teaching how visual and verbal elements of a page work together to make meaning; it can give writing classes a new and intensely social application; and it can give students useful skills. (346–7)

Research on this composing—which is basically a new model of composing in its attention to the visual and to audience—is needed. In this model of composing, meaning created through the interaction between visual and verbal resources is central, and also key to composing is the role of audience and the social nature of writing, an aspect of writing process that received attention later rather than earlier during this time, and that, as we will see, has become a central feature in the new models of composing emerging now.

And still, outside of school, people wrote: soldiers composed accounts of Korea and Vietnam; Ford, a pardon of Nixon; Martin Luther King, a letter from Birmingham Jail.

"It's not where you start that matters, but where you finish"