

TEACHING DEVELOPMENTAL WRITING ONLINE:
NECESSARY, BUT NOT AN EVIL

-

Madelyn Grace Fox

Teaching Developmental Writing Online: Necessary, But Not an Evil

A Thesis

Presented to

The College of Graduate Studies

Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

M.A. English

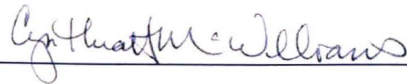
Madelyn Grace Fox

May, 2015

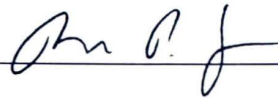
May, 2015

To the College of Graduate Studies:


We are submitting a thesis written by Madelyn Fox entitled "Teaching Developmental Writing Online: Necessary, But Not an Evil." We have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content. We recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of M.A. English.



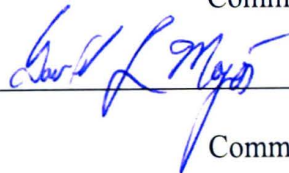
Research/Committee Advisor/Chair



Committee Member

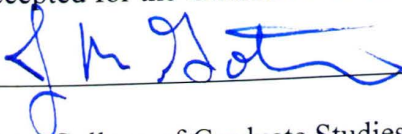


Committee Member



Committee Member

Accepted for the Graduate and Research Council



Dean, College of Graduate Studies

Statement of Permission to Use

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the M.A. English at Austin Peay State University, I agree that the library shall make it available to borrowers under the rules of the library. Brief quotations from this field study are allowable without special permission, provided that accurate acknowledgement of the source is made.

Permissions for extensive quotation or reproduction of this field study may be granted by my major professor, or in his/her absence, by the Head of the Interlibrary Services when, in the opinion of either, the proposed use of the material is for scholarly purposes. Any copying or use of the material in this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Madelyn G. Fox

Signature

20 Apr. 2015

Date

For Mrs. Carol McMurray, who made me a better writer.

Critical Principles and Influences

Contrary to popular belief, writing is becoming more important and relevant in this age of technology rather than less so. As our world becomes increasingly digitized, it becomes of paramount importance that people gain the necessary skills to communicate effectively in writing. Emails, text messages, Tweets, Facebook posts, blogs, and countless other forms of written content are the primary forms of expression and communication. In fact, a study by the Pew Research Center reports that, “31% [of Americans] said they preferred texts to talking on the phone... [and] another 14% said the contact method they prefer depends on the situation” (Smith). As a result, it has become even more important that students learn not only how to write and reason, but also how to do so appropriately in our highly digitized and quickly changing culture.

I was inspired to pursue the possibility of teaching developmental composition online as a result of my experience teaching the Enhanced English 1010 writing labs at Austin Peay State University, and specifically the pilot section of an online version of the same course. As I began planning what I would do differently the next time I taught the online course, I realized there is very little research into teaching developmental composition in an online setting. While there is a fair amount of information on teaching English online, particularly literature, there has not been as much research into teaching composition, and especially not composition for those who are classified as developmental students. I broadened my research and looked into articles about online teaching in general, finding information on how to make an online course as effective as possible and how to use technology in a way that enhances the lesson rather than distracting from it. In many cases I found that strategies applied to other disciplines could

be easily modified for a writing course and could potentially be highly beneficial for composition students.

I specifically found the work of Marisol Clark-Ibañez and Linda Scott to be very helpful even though their focus was on teaching an Introduction to Sociology course. While sociology differs significantly from composition, both fields involve subjective assessments and instruction, making much of the authors' input highly relevant for teaching writing. They emphasize student engagement and instructor feedback; both of which are of absolute importance for an online composition course, and they specifically address the challenges of adapting traditional curriculum for an online course.

After doing this research, I began to feel that online courses could be more beneficial than I had previously thought, especially for a school such as APSU with a high percentage of students with full-time jobs and families. After all, online instruction is ideal for non-traditional and shy students because the online environment is flexible and allows them to communicate with a certain amount of anonymity and protection. I also began to think about the fact that an online writing course forces students to do far more writing than a traditional course does, and, therefore, could potentially be a very successful mode of instruction. In addition to their usual writing assignments, students must communicate with their peers and their professor almost exclusively in writing. Although students who live in the same town as the university could meet with the professor during office hours, the majority of communication would be through writing, and what better practice can we offer students? Though I have always been skeptical of online instruction, I realize that it is necessary for some students to earn their degrees,

and if online courses are going to be used anyway, they should be conducted with the most care and meticulousness as possible.

The students who are placed in English 1010-E are often non-traditional students with families and/or full-time jobs outside the classroom. They are sometimes ELL students who are shy about asking questions. Those who have come to college straight after high school often have low self-confidence in their writing abilities. They are the ideal candidates for an online course because the online classroom is more flexible for students with jobs and families; the feedback is more personalized for students who need extra attention; and the environment is safe and supportive for students who are normally too shy to speak up and ask questions in a traditional classroom setting.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
A Brief History of Developmental Writing.....	2
Defining College Writing.....	4
The Development of APSU's Structured Learning Assistance Model.....	7
Inside the SLA Writing Labs.....	9
Adapting Writing Courses for Online Instruction.....	12
Online Teaching Strategies.....	14
Piloting the First Online English 1010-E.....	19
Changes in Spring 2015.....	21
Plans for Future Endeavors.....	23
Works Cited.....	25
Annotated Bibliography.....	28

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Online handout from Spring 2014.....	21
Figure 2: Online handout from Spring 2015.....	21

Introduction

It is by no means a new phenomenon that freshmen entering universities are not as prepared as their professors would like them to be. As early as 1885, America's universities were forced to implement programs to help their struggling students with what they considered basic writing skills (Connors 47). However, that was during a time when information was not as freely exchanged, and it is understandable that writing instruction would be nowhere near standardized across secondary schools. Now that it is 2014, and we have the benefit of widespread telephones, cell phones, the Internet, and e-mail, shouldn't this problem have been solved by the ease of communication and collaboration? Reality tells us that this is far from being the truth. Four-year universities are still offering developmental writing courses for freshmen who enter without the necessary skills for being successful writers in college. Instructors are hired; elaborate programs are put in place, and students are often required to devote more time to their writing than in a traditional three-hour course, just as they have been since 1885.

There are many reasons for the persistence of this problem. Michael Dubson points out that, "[one] phenomenon that affects student attitudes about and ability in writing is the image-heavy/text-light world most of our students have come of age in" (98). Certainly, many arguments and studies support this claim, including Nicholas Carr's *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, a text that explores the science behind how technology affects our ability to think deeply and critically. Professors also point to ineffective high school instruction, some blaming the teachers, others blaming the policies. Elizabeth Dutro criticizes the latter in her discussion of the assumptions made by curriculum writers about students' home lives, and how detrimental these

assumptions can be to writing instruction when applied to students living outside the perceived norm (Dutro). Anne Ruggles Gere points to the paradox inherent in writing, that it is often used as a punishment, but then upheld as the measure of a complete education. This creates a conundrum wherein students develop a negative perception of writing while it simultaneously remains a staple of academia (Gere). There is widespread agreement that the challenges of teaching writing are one of the most important issues facing higher education today, but there is little consensus on how to address these challenges.

Brief History of Developmental Writing

Over the course of the past 130 years, universities have tried a number of strategies to bring incoming freshmen up to college level writing standards. These strategies have gone through countless changes and alterations to accommodate fluctuating student populations, changes in composition trends, and administrative requirements. From the days of the “Awkward Squad” at Yale in the 1920s, a fairly progressive but insensitively named program, developmental writing courses have cycled through various methods and structures, and composition in general has seen a large shift from product- to process-oriented instruction (Crowley 65). Most notably, there has been an ongoing debate within the composition community over whether developmental composition should even be taught, with some instructors arguing that colleges should establish prerequisites that bar those who are deficient in written communication skills from entering in the first place. Indeed, in the late 1950s, it began to look as though colleges could afford to eliminate freshman composition altogether. As Robert Connors

explains, “fewer but much better prepared students were seeking admission. We might think of the period as the antithesis of a literacy crisis: there was no press of new student populations, test scores were rising every year, and there were fewer bachelor’s degrees conferred in 1960 than in 1950 (Connors 55). However, this era did not last, and as college enrollment rates rose again in the 1960s and composition developed as its own discipline, the debate swung back in favor of reform over abolition (Connors 56).

The debate continued through the 1960s, but beginning in the 1970s, the cries to do away with freshman composition became fainter. As open admissions policies became widespread, universities were faced with a student population that was far less prepared than that of previous decades. Connors writes that, “any chance that abolitionist ideas might have had in the early 1970s was swamped by mid-decade. The ‘back to the basics’ movement, the rise of basic writing as a subdiscipline, even the writing process movement all presumed a required freshman course” (58). The education reform boom of the 1980s brought attention to the large number of students who were not prepared for the expectations of the college classroom, and instructors were offered ample opportunity to work with developmental students who were deficient in their writing skills.

The most recent policy shift affecting the developmental writing debate is the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. As one of the most controversial education reform bills in American history, the NCLB is regarded by many college instructors as contributing to a greater amount of students who enter college without the writing skills they need, due to secondary schools feeling pressured to pass students with sub-par scores in order not to lose federal funding. As James Gerard Caillier explains,

Those schools that do not make [Annual Yearly Progress] for two consecutive years in each of their demographic subgroups will be labeled as failing and will have to offer choice to transfer... Schools failing to make their AYP three years in a row will have to provide students with supplemental services or free tutoring... If a school fails a fourth year, they have to write a school improvement plan, which has to be approved by the state. Lastly, schools are reconstituted if they fail five years in a row.

(Caillier 583)

The AYP is determined based on students' scores on standardized tests, meaning that public schools are often forced to teach to the test, rather than to students' learning styles, in order to have the best chance of meeting AYP goals. This incentivizes passing students who are still not truly proficient in certain areas so that schools can maintain success rates that keep them from losing funding and being reconstituted.

Defining College Writing

First, we must determine what we mean when we discuss college writing. Just what are these skills that universities consider necessary and ubiquitous, but that are falling through the cracks? Just as with the discord on how to address student deficiencies, we lack a concrete answer for this question across the board. Countless instructors have written about what they believe constitutes college-level writing, but there has not been a comprehensive definition that has been agreed upon universally. As a result, each school or state governing board is left to decide what its particular set of pre-requisite standards is. However, there do seem to be a few basic aspects that appear

in most definitions of college-level writing. In his essay, “College-Level Writing: A Departmental Perspective,” James Gentile outlines some basic guidelines that appear across schools: “higher-level critical reading, thinking, and writing skills, ...[and] a type of writing that both evidences those skills and demonstrates mastery of the conventions of academic prose” (312). These are skills that incoming college freshmen are expected to know, or at least have a basic understanding of, so that their skills may be polished and honed in their composition courses. Keith Hjortshoj’s book *The Transition to College Writing*, updated through the years, provides another account of what colleges expect. Not only does he address the specifics of what constitutes a college-level paper—“you will have a clear argument...you will select and organize information in a logical, sequential order the reader can easily follow” (Hjortshoj 84)—he also points out strategies for achieving these aims and gives explanations of how college professors might mark a paper based on their expectations: “If they do not mark [small] errors on the papers they return to you, the reason is not that they don’t notice or don’t care. Instead, minor errors are so common in student writing that most teachers don’t have the time to mark them and do not view this editorial work as their responsibility” (Hjortshoj 87). Not only does his book offer help and guidance for incoming freshmen, it reinforces the idea that it is easier to explain to students what to expect from their professors than to define exactly what “college-level writing” is.

The fluid nature of college expectations makes it difficult for high school teachers, who are already limited in time and resources, to prepare their students for college. In “Am I a Liar?: The Angst of a High School English Teacher,” the author explains that her “visions of college English are updated mainly by alumni who visit and

share their experiences with me” (Jordan et al. 39). As she states, the lack of communication from colleges to high schools about what will be expected of students when they reach higher education is crippling to high school English instruction. High school teachers are often forced to guess what to teach based on the anecdotal and limited evidence of the few students who stay in contact after graduation. The author shares another case in which a visiting former student overheard a current student ask a question about her research paper and replied, ““Don’t worry about it. I just graduated from college and I never *once* had to write a research paper”” (Jordan et al. 36). Other than the troubling notion that a student was able to get through college without writing a single research paper, this instance highlights the fact that there is no overarching entity which informs high school teachers what their students will be expected to know by the time they enter a freshman writing course.

Because of the enigmatic requirements of college writing, and continued emphasis on standardized testing for high school students, there does not appear to be anything on the horizon that will mitigate the disconnect between what is taught in high school English and what colleges expect incoming freshmen to be able to do. As a result, the need for developmental writing courses has little chance of decreasing even as written communication skills and digital literacy become increasingly important. Moreover, as society puts increased emphasis on obtaining a college degree, some demographic groups such as low-income students, adults who have full-time jobs, and those who previously attended college but were not successful, are finding ways to attend college. However, these same groups of people are often the very students who need developmental writing instruction. In essence, America’s education policies and societal norms are creating a

culture who feels obligated to attend college, but those same policies mean that incoming colleges students lack the appropriate skills to be successful. In this way, developmental writing programs are as important, if not more important, than ever.

The Development of APSU's Structured Learning Assistance Model

In 1984, in response to the nationwide outcry for education reform, the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) instituted a new policy for developmental and remedial courses. As their basis for college-level standards, they turned to the College Board's 1983 publication "Academic Preparation for College" (Bader and Hardin 35). Under this program, students who were identified as deficient by standardized test scores and placement tests were required to enroll in remedial courses. After successfully completing the remedial course, students could then enroll in a regular freshman core class (Bader and Hardin 37). Though the assessment methods underwent several changes between 1984 and 2001, the model for the developmental courses remained the same. Though retention and success rates did improve under this program (Bader and Hardin 38), a major drawback was that, "Although remedial and developmental courses did not carry graduation credit, grades earned in these courses did appear on transcripts" (40). This stipulation meant that students were paying for these courses, spending at least one semester enrolled in them, and receiving grades that affected their GPA, but without the benefit of having their time and credits count towards graduation.

In 2007, that changed when TBR mandated that developmental courses count for institutional credit. Austin Peay State University's response to this mandate was to create

the Structured Learning Assistance (SLA) program across the core curriculum, including writing courses. Enhanced English 1010 (English 1010-E) is the developmental equivalent of English 1010, the traditional freshman composition course. Both courses are worth three credit hours, are taught by full-time faculty members, and use the same required texts. The difference between the two is that English 1010-E also has a two-hour-per-week lab component, in addition to the three hours of lecture, that is designed to give struggling students extra practice and information which a typical lecture course simply does not have time to give. As the National Center for Academic Transformation report states, “These core courses will not change in content, but will be linked to SLA workshops” (NCAT). A major goal of the program is for the lecture portion to mirror a regular English 1010 course as much as possible in structure, assignments, and even required texts. In theory, the only “Enhanced” part of English 1010-E is the extra two hours in the writing lab. The department requires the exact same textbooks for both English 1010 and English 1010-E so that the books that students have do not identify them as being in a developmental course. Additionally, after students complete English 1010-E and go on to a regular English 1020 class, their new professors are not told who was or was not in English 1010-E, with the hope that those who were in developmental English are unidentifiable from their peers who were in a regular English 1010 course.

Before the Structured Learning Assistant (SLA) program was put into place in the fall of 2007, the percentage of students who successfully passed their developmental course was at 54.4%, using students enrolled in the 2005-2006 academic year as a baseline (APSU 11). The cumulative success rate of students enrolled in the new English 1010-E program from 2007-2014 increased to 69.9% (11). It should be noted that the

success rate under the old model was calculated allowing students two full academic years to successfully complete the course, whereas the SLA success rate is calculated based on one semester. In other words, not only has the completion rate increased, it has done so despite the program having higher standards for success.

Additionally, the one-year retention rates of students enrolled in developmental courses has increased significantly under the new SLA model. The 2006 cohort was used as a baseline because it is the most recent academic year to the SLA model being put in place. The number of students who returned to the university the next fall was 52.3% under the old model, and that number has increased to a cumulative rate of 64.9% with the SLA model for the 2007-2013 cohorts (APSU 12). Even more compelling are the rates of students who have graduated from the university within six years of completing the English 1010-E courses. Under the old DSP model, only 14.29% of the 2006 cohort had graduated after six years, compared to 29.46% of the 2007 cohort, and 33.33% of the 2008 cohort (APSU 11). Over twice as many developmental students are now graduating from the university within six years than were previously graduating under the DSP model. To emphasize the impact this program has had, 586 more students have successfully completed English 1010, and 208 additional students have been retained as a result of the English 1010-E courses than would have under the DSP model (APSU).

Inside the SLA Writing Labs

The writing labs have a few general requirements that are the same across the board. No out-of-class work may be assigned, and students may not take assignments home to finish and bring back; all work must be completed within the 55-minute

timeframe of the class. This policy is in place to protect and benefit the students in these Enhanced courses who already have a heavier course load due to the two extra hours of instruction they are receiving in the labs, and is also intended to keep them from feeling that they need to prioritize lab work over their major assignments in the lecture.

Additionally, no lab work may be graded for correctness, but only for completion. Under this model, students receive credit for coming to class, participating, and doing their work. They do not receive grades in the labs based on how *well* they do the in-class assignments, just whether they do them at all.

These labs are taught by Graduate Assistants (GAs) from the English department who have been picked by the Director of Composition and the English Graduate Coordinator. Each GA is partnered with at least one professor for a total of three to four writing labs. The way that each professor structures his or her course largely determines the type of instruction that each GA uses. In the fall of 2013, I worked with Dr. Charla White-Major on one section, and with another professor for two sections. For Dr. White-Major's classes, she provided me with a detailed course calendar, complete with specific topics I should be covering in the labs. While the students were required to have assignments completed on certain days, the lesson plans and teaching were largely left up to me. For example, while Dr. White-Major would determine which days the class should focus on comma usage, I had the freedom to create the day's lesson and any classwork. In the other professor's labs, there was less structure imposed on which topics to cover, and I was left to determine what to teach based on what I could see students struggling with. Both of these approaches worked in their own way, both for the students and for me as a first-time instructor. The more structured approach gave me some

guidance as to what topics I should be teaching, while the less structured approach taught me valuable lessons in flexibility and adaptation.

Though the general structure of the course is the same across the department, each professor sets his or her own personal attendance policies and assignments. For example, one professor simply requires that students attend ten lab sessions in order to pass that portion of the course and offers extra credit to anyone who attends twenty sessions or more. Other professors allow a certain amount of absences and then begin to dock points after students reach that limit. Some professors require students to write a paragraph during each course meeting in order to get consistent examples of the students' writing; others have no specific requirements other than attendance. As a result, the English 1010-E courses still feel like individual, tailored courses that differ across instructors, while also maintaining a level of consistency that ensures that students are getting the help they need.

A typical class period for all the labs I taught involved 15-20 minutes of grammar review and instruction as we worked together on a topic, then 20-25 minutes of individual or group classwork, with all of us coming back together as a large group at the end of class to go over the assignment and address any lingering questions. Depending on the lesson, I would provide a worksheet or writing prompt for the students to complete during this time, which I would then collect at the end of the class period. I tried to vary my instruction methods from week to week so that students did not become disengaged, and I frequently used examples from popular culture in order to (hopefully) help them remember certain grammar rules. I also emphasized that the goal of the course was not for them to memorize every comma rule or MLA citation format, but for them to know

how to use the resources available to them in order to correct their own work. After all, very few students who are English majors are placed in developmental writing courses, so it is of paramount importance that the real-world usefulness of the course be stressed in order to demonstrate that it is still essential for a nursing student or a computer programmer to be able to write effectively.

In these writing labs, many of the students began the semester with an attitude of skepticism at best. A few rare students seemed to feel genuinely neutral about being there, but it was clear that the majority would rather be doing something else with their time. However, in both semesters, as we went on and completed more lessons, and specifically once the students had revised their own work, I could see them begin to open up and engage more in the class. For one thing, they began to feel more comfortable with me, asking me questions and coming to me for help. Most notably, they began to take risks with their writing, trying new words and sentence structures, and though they weren't always successful on their first try, they were still moving forward and making progress. More than once I witnessed a student finally grasp a concept that had been a challenge, and across the board I saw a noted improvement in students' organization and writing style as students were forced, often for the first time, to write a considerable amount throughout the semester.

Adapting Writing Courses for Online Instruction

In our increasingly global world, colleges are being urged more and more to offer online classes, and the demand by students is certainly present. As America's conflicts overseas have been winding down, increasing numbers of military personnel have come

home and enrolled in courses that are paid for by the GI Bill; adults with families and full-time jobs have realized that they have a better chance at job security with a four-year degree; rising tuition costs mean that low-income students fresh out of high school who want to attend college may not be able to do so without working at least part-time. For all of these groups, the best option for them to be able to complete a degree is to do so online in an environment that offers them flexibility of time and location. But what happens when these groups of people need developmental writing instruction that is only offered in a traditional course setting?

The question remains, and it is an important one, as to whether a student can truly receive effective writing instruction in a virtual setting, and specifically whether a student can receive effective *developmental* writing instruction online. Not only is it possible, for some students it is preferable. Online courses best serve students who already have jobs and/or families, or those who must work while they are in school. Additionally, online courses are ideal for students who find it intimidating to speak up in a traditional classroom due to low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy. If we look back at the factors in 1984 that prompted TBR to implement a comprehensive developmental program, we see that,

40% of all freshmen entering TBR institutions were underprepared for college level work. This percentage included students who had selected a program other than college preparatory while in secondary school, students who had dropped out of school and who had eventually earned their General Education Development (GED) certification, students who had disabilities that had interfered with their participation in a

college-preparatory curriculum, and adults who were entering college after an extended period of time away from academic life. (Bader and Hardin 36)

These characteristics of students who need developmental instruction have a significant overlap with the characteristics of students who can hypothetically benefit the most from online instruction. While individual personalities must always be taken into account, this information suggests that online developmental writing courses, when taught creatively and meticulously, have the potential to be just as effective as traditional courses.

Online Teaching Strategies

It is important to bear in mind that even the techniques of traditional classroom instruction with which educators are familiar and comfortable are not 100% effective. Students still fail their in-person writing classes, and the ways to prevent that failure are the same for both virtual and traditional instruction. In any subject and in any classroom format, student success depends on the attentiveness and motivation of both student and teacher. In her essay "Innovative Writing Instruction: Writing Rewired: Teaching Writing in an Online Setting," Stephanie Imig asserts, "Many traditional schools face a similar wasteland [of student engagement] as they employ cookie-cutter curricula and gear daily education toward the rigorous mountain of testing" (80). Clearly, the challenge of engaging students' interest and motivating them to submit assignments is just as present in a traditional classroom as it is online. As a result, similar strategies must be used to achieve student engagement in a virtual classroom as those that have been proven effective in traditional classrooms.

Admittedly, the benefits of the face-to-face interaction provided in a traditional classroom can never be fully replicated by any online tools. The dynamics that come with verbal (and more importantly, nonverbal) communication can only truly be experienced when people are sharing the same physical space. However, with the wide range of online tools available, that interaction can be very closely replicated, and in some cases may even be more beneficial specifically because of the lack of physical interaction. In an essay published in *The Journal of General Education*, Kerri-Lee Krause writes, “Although face-to-face contact with teaching faculty remains crucial in developing students’ academic writing skills, there is a place, too, for judicious use of online technologies to provide support in this area” (203). The challenge then does not lie in the technology itself, but in the instructor’s ability to use that technology effectively so that students feel comfortable and willing to participate in the conversation.

This lack of face-to-face interaction can be turned to the instructor’s advantage in work-shopping and peer-reviewing papers. Without having to confront their classmates in-person, students may feel more comfortable sharing ideas and offering constructive criticism. Online instructor Shelbie Witte utilized a blog in her virtual classroom in an attempt to allow students to express themselves in a broader environment, and when the blog was temporarily disabled by administrators, students made such comments as, “By taking away our access to the...blog, you have taken away my voice” (Witte 95). This statement demonstrates students’ highly positive response to being given the freedom to express their thoughts and ideas in a setting in which they feel supported and safe. If anything, the larger challenge in online expression falls to instructors in the giving of feedback and hoping that the correct tone is being conveyed through writing. Criticism

can feel much harsher without the aid of vocal and facial inflections. However, online teachers can overcome this challenge to a certain extent by establishing a tone and rapport early on in the class, as well as by utilizing more informal writing techniques such as emoticons to convey more subtle ideas.

Additionally, participation in an online course can be quantified in a way that it cannot in traditional courses. By requiring students to post discussion topics and respond to their peers, instructors can easily give a participation grade that truly reflects how much a student is engaging in the course. While shy, introverted students in traditional courses may receive a low participation grade while still listening and absorbing the material, those same students can more accurately reflect their attentiveness in an online environment. This aspect of online courses is especially relevant in a developmental writing course in which students may feel that their questions or input are inadequate. The relative anonymity offered by the virtual environment has the potential to empower students who would have been silent in an on-site classroom, giving teachers a better understanding of their needs and abilities than they might have received otherwise.

One of the most noticeable ways that an online setting can be used to the advantage of teaching composition is that it allows for students to write on their own schedule, within reason. Kerri-Lee Krause discusses this phenomena, saying, "To ensure successful integration in the sociocultural setting of the university or college, students need scaffolding... [and this] scaffolding comes in the form of an online resource that allows students to learn and develop academic writing skills at their own pace" (204). Though deadlines must still be met, the fact that students are able to "attend" the lecture at any point throughout the day enables them the freedom to arrange the class at a time

when they are best suited to work. Whether they are most effective in the morning or evening, they can tailor their classroom experience to their strengths. Moreover, this level of personal control encourages students to become more self-aware and self-explorative in their learning process. Students must still conform themselves to the parameters of the assignments, but they are presented with a more visible manifestation of the ways that the class material can be conformed to their needs, which is an essential realization of the instructor-student relationship. When students are able to see the ways in which the instructor, and the course itself, are working to help them, they feel more supported and encouraged.

Additionally, teaching writing online provides more practice in written communication than a traditional course does. Discussions that would normally be spoken, and questions that would normally be asked out loud, must, in an online course, be communicated just as effectively through writing. Moreover, students receive significantly more reading practice in an online course because they receive their assignments, lessons, and feedback primarily in written form. While this aspect does present a challenge for students who have difficulty with reading comprehension, even that obstacle can be overcome with innovative instruction techniques. The ease of file-sharing provides ample opportunities for instructors to use audio and visual methods to teach certain concepts, and even instructor feedback can be recorded as an audio file and shared with an individual student to supplement the written comments on a paper. Powerpoint presentations with colorful visuals and charts can liven up typical black-and-white blocks of text to engage students more easily. While instructors cannot (and should not) avoid written instruction and feedback entirely, supplementing it with other methods

can significantly improve students' absorption of the material and even provide the necessary scaffolding for improving reading comprehension.

The lessons themselves, the true meat of the course, can be one of the most difficult aspects to tailor to the online environment. Writing about writing quickly becomes dense and abstract, discouraging students from paying attention and reading in detail. This can be avoided through the use of slideshow presentations which incorporate graphics and examples that are more suited to a visual and virtual environment, and through videos of instructors providing short lectures in order to increase the feeling of personal interaction. Stephanie Imig incorporated a combination approach in dealing with George Ella Lyon's poem, "Where I'm From" in her online class: "I modeled my list [of items in my life] through a PowerPoint presentation, and students submitted at least one item from their lists to the chat box for each category" (82). Imig continued the lesson by inserting a recording of her reading her own finished poem while students responded in real-time. She concludes, "It was the closest to a read-around I have ever experienced since teaching online" (Imig 82). Though instructors must be creative in their approach, it is possible to create an online classroom that feels very much like a traditional brick-and-mortar one.

In her essay, "It's Not *The Matrix*: Thinking about Online Writing Instruction," Merry Rendahl urges online instructors, "As we move toward computer-mediated or technology-enhanced teaching, we need not distance ourselves from our humanity or human connections. Through technology we can foster human to human connections that aid learning and overcome distances between teachers and learners" (136). Her point is a poignant one—because both instructors and students are human, technology is only a tool

being used to enable people to triumph over the difficulties of distance. As long as it is used responsibly and with careful attentiveness, it can be a highly effective method of creating a safe and supportive learning environment, and one that fosters growth and self-discovery. Most importantly, an online class has the ability to make both instructors and students re-evaluate themselves, which is a vital aspect to any classroom setting. If the very traits we praise and aspire to so much in traditional classrooms are possible in the virtual classroom, the only obstacle becomes the instructors' ability to effectively use the tools given them in order to connect with their students, and isn't that the major obstacle to teaching in any setting?

Piloting the First Online English 1010-E

When the Director of Composition informed me that I would be working on the first online section of English 1010-E with Dr. White-Major, I was excited by the opportunity, but unsure of how the class structure would work. After all, I could not schedule weekly lab "meetings" with the students to help them catch up on the skills they needed. After speaking with Dr. White-Major, we agreed that the best strategy was for me to try to adapt some of my lessons and writing tips into a written form that I could post online in the D2L shell for the course. While some of my materials ("Four Ways to Frame Your Introduction") were easy to post online, others were less conducive to a strictly written format without the benefit of classroom instruction ("Verb Tenses & Moods"). I made it my goal to post weekly tips and tricks or at least attach a handout that might be helpful to the students in their writing. I also wrote posts about more general items, such as clarity in writing, and ways to keep a paper focused and concise.

While students' initial interest was fairly encouraging, I saw their enthusiasm quickly flag. I was able to see specifically how many and who had viewed each topic, and the number of students viewing the content dropped rapidly. One diligent student continued to check in, and sometimes even post thankful replies, but the majority of the class eventually ignored the materials I was providing. I think this can be mostly attributed to the fact that there were no lab "assignments" that they had to complete for credit. Unfortunately, with the online section, assigning any kind of lab work technically fell into the category of out-of-class assignments, so my hands were somewhat tied as far as what I could require of them. I continued posting my tips and checking into the class on a regular basis to make sure no one had asked any questions or requested help, but the communication lines were always silent.

Out of the 15 students in the class, only four failed the course, leaving a success rate of 73.3% (APSU). While the sample size is admittedly quite small, it is encouraging. However, I still felt that there was a certain amount of student engagement lacking. Dr. White-Major and I were both checking in frequently, and we had even taped short videos in which we introduced ourselves and welcomed the students to the class in the hopes that seeing two actual instructors would help them to humanize us and separate the lecture from the lab. However, the fact that there was not a separate lab *meeting* hindered us from achieving what we do on-site, which is to have two different people echoing each other's advice, thereby adding credibility to our claims. Though the pilot section of English 1010-W1E was ultimately a success, it is our responsibility as educators to constantly evaluate and assess what we can do to improve our instruction.

Changes in Spring 2015

This semester, Dr. White-Major and I are teaching the second section of online English 1010-E. Our class size is smaller than last year, but the students are much more engaged. I still post handouts, but I have made significant changes in order to make them more visually appealing and useful in the online environment. While the formatting is not drastically different, I have begun color-coding each handout, which seems to help the students absorb the information despite it being a strictly visual medium. I have also used advice from seminars on creating effective visual presentations and have broken up large blocks of text into smaller, more manageable chunks (Wadia). I continue to use references to popular culture, and quirky sentence examples in the hopes that these will be easier for students to remember. Though it sounds simplistic, I use “Schoolhouse Rock” as a model, reasoning that unique and fun learning materials have a better chance of lodging themselves in students’ brains for the long-term.

Four Ways to Frame Your Introduction

1. Historical Review
2. Anecdote
3. Surprising Statement
4. Famous Person

1. Historical review: Some topics are better understood if a brief historical review of the topic is presented to lead into the discussion of the moment. Such topics might include “a biographical sketch of a war hero,” “an upcoming election of a convicted criminal,” or “crises and the younger generation.” It is important that the historical review be brief so that it does not take over the paper.

2. Anecdote: An anecdote is a little story. Begin a paper by relating a small story that leads into the topic of your paper. Your story should be a small episode, not a full blown story with characters and plot and setting. It also should not be a story told in first-person perspective. It’s a universal story, not your personal experience. Be sure that your story does not take over the paper. Remember, it is an introduction, not the paper itself.

3. Surprising statement: A surprising statement is a favorite introductory technique of professional writers. There are many ways a statement can surprise a reader. Sometimes the statement is surprising because it is disgusting. Sometimes it is joyful. Sometimes it is shocking. Sometimes it is surprising because of who said it. Professional writers have honed this technique to a fine edge. It is not used as much as the first two patterns, but it is used.

4. Famous person: It may be something that person said or something he or she did that can be presented as an interest grabber. The famous person may be dead or alive. The famous person may be a good person like the Pope, or he or she may be a bad person like John Wilkes Booth. Of course, bringing up this person’s name must be relevant to the topic.

The above material is adapted from a handout prepared by Harry Livermore for his high school English classes at Cook High School in Ada, Georgia.

Subject/Verb Agreement

Subject/Verb Agreement refers to whether the subject of a sentence matches the verb in **person** and **number**. When a verb is conjugated, all of the possible forms are listed. For example, the conjugation of the verb “to have” looks like this:

Singular		Plural	
1 st Person	I have	1 st Person	We have
2 nd Person	You have	2 nd Person	You have
3 rd Person	He/She/It has	3 rd Person	They have

In the following examples, the subject is red and the verb is blue.

I have two dogs.

The subject “I” is first-person singular, so the verb is “have.”

She has two dogs.

The subject “She” is third-person singular, so the verb is “has.”

Subject/Verb agreement can get confusing when the subject is difficult to identify.

[Before we went to the movies], we ate dinner at an Italian restaurant.

Introductory clause “we” is the subject of the whole sentence.

“An introductory clause may have a subject and verb of its own, but that is not the subject of the whole sentence because it is **dependent** upon the information that we find out in the rest of the sentence, and it cannot stand on its own as a sentence.

The sentence could be rearranged to read:

We ate dinner at an Italian restaurant before we went to the movies.

Subject/Verb agreement is also difficult in cases where there is a dummy subject like “there” or “here”:

There are many beads.

“Beads” is the subject because the sentence could read: “many beads are there.”

Here is the water.

“Water” is the subject because the sentence could read: “the water is here.”

“In both these examples, “many” is an adjective telling how much.

Figure 1: Online handout from Spring 2014

Figure 2: Online Handout from Spring 2015

I have also posted many more “News” items on the course homepage this semester in order to remind students of upcoming deadlines and to encourage them to contact me with any questions they may have. Compared to last year’s radio silence, I have already heard from several of the students with questions about the content or for feedback on their writing. This level of engagement lets me know that students are reading my posts and that they feel comfortable asking for assistance; both of which were lacking in the pilot section of online 1010-E. Of course, we will not know until the end of the semester whether this translates into an increased success rate.

The largest change I have introduced this semester is the use of “Quizzes” in order to assess writing. In attempting to mimic the on-site course as much as possible, I wanted to come up with a way for students to submit small pieces of writing on a weekly basis for me to assess and mark. However, coming up with a way to ensure that the students did not spend more than 55 minutes (the length of the on-site labs) was an obstacle. To avoid having students treat these writing assignments as homework, and to ensure that they are not prepared statements, I have the students take a 55-minute “quiz” each Thursday. The quiz consists of one long-answer question that asks them to write three to four paragraphs on a specific topic, and I grade the quiz based on whether the student completes the assignment or not. Students cannot see the prompt until they open the quiz, so there is no way that they can spend more than the allotted 55 minutes, even with preparation and organization factored in. I then provide feedback to correct any errors or to offer suggestions, but the students receive full credit for the quiz as long as they submit it with the appropriate amount of writing.

Plans for Future Endeavors

If I am able to teach more developmental writing courses in the future, I plan to broaden my range of instruction and feedback to include more visual and audio methods. I am particularly interested in the video capture method for teaching proper MLA formatting so that students could follow along with a video screen capture and could replay the video as many times as needed. I would also like to offer the same video capture feedback on their papers so that I could walk students through their writing in the same way that I might in a one-on-one conference. Using this technology could greatly enhance the online experience and make it just as useful as a traditional course, especially because of the ability to replay videos and revisit materials as needed.

I would also like to use blogs for the lab portion of this class to demonstrate to students how their writing is meant to be a part of a larger intellectual conversation. In order to stay within the time constraints of the labs, I would have the students use the paragraphs they write for their “quizzes” and revise them to be published using my feedback. After publishing these paragraphs to their blogs, the students would be required to respond to a certain number of their classmates’ posts so that they begin to understand that it is important to have a solid argument that stands up to critique. The difficulty of explaining in a traditional course that a paper is not written solely for the professor could be more easily demonstrated as students respond to their peers’ claims and offer alternatives. Students could strengthen their own arguments by seeing what opposition there is and addressing it.

Contrary to popular belief, online courses require just as much work from both instructors and students as traditional courses do. It is not enough for professors to simply

transcribe materials from their on-site courses and expect them to work in an online setting; it is not enough for students to log in once a week and submit assignments blindly. In order for an online writing course to be successful, both groups must commit to doing just as much work as in a traditional course. The trade-off, however, is that both groups will have more freedom in scheduling and pacing. Since it is clear that neither developmental writing classes nor online courses are in danger of disappearing from universities, educators must work to find ways to teach the necessary material to the greatest number of people in the most effective ways possible. While it does require significant changes to lesson plans and instruction methods, teaching developmental writing online is not only viable, but it has the potential to be highly beneficial.

Works Cited

- Austin Peay State University. *Academic Support Center Annual Report 2013-2014*.
- Bader, Carol Hopper, and Carlette Jackson Hardin. "History of Developmental Studies in Tennessee." *Histories of Developmental Education* 2.1 (2002): 35-35. Web. 22 March 2015.
- Bloom, Lynn Z., Donald A. Daiker, and Edward M. White, eds. *Composition in the Twenty-first Century: Crisis and Change*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1996. Print.
- Caillier, James Gerard. "The No Child Left Behind Act: "Are States on Target to Make Their Goals?" *The Journal of Negro Education* 76.4 (2007): 582-96. *JSTOR*. Web. 22 March 2014.
- Carr, Nicholas. *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*. New York: Norton, 2011. Print.
- Clark-Ibañez, Marisol, and Linda Scott. "Learning to Teach Online." *Teaching Sociology*. 36.1 (2008): 34-41. *JSTOR*. Web. 3 April 2014.
- Connors, Robert J. "The Abolition Debate in Composition: A Short History." Bloom, Daiker, and White 47-63.
- Crowley, Sharon. "Around 1971: Current-Traditional Rhetoric and Process Models of Composing." Bloom, Daiker, and White 64-74.
- Drake, Francis E. "Developmental Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 1.4 (1950): 3-6. *JSTOR*. Web. 27 March 2014.
- Dubson, Michael. "Whose Paper Is This, Anyway? Why Most Students Don't Embrace the Writing They Do for Their Writing Classes." Sullivan and Tinberg 92-109.

- Durrington, Vance A., Amy Berryhill, and Jeanne Swafford. "Strategies for Enhancing Student Interactivity in an Online Environment." *College Teaching* 54.1 (2006): 190-193. *JSTOR*. Web. 3 April 2014.
- Dutro, Elizabeth. "What 'Hard Times' Means: Mandated Curricula, Class-Privileged Assumptions, and the Lives of Poor Children." *Research in the Teaching of English* 44.3 (2010): 255-91. Print.
- Gentile, James M. "College-Level Writing: A Departmental Perspective." Sullivan and Tinberg 311-29.
- Gere, Anne Ruggles. "The Long Revolution in Composition." Bloom, Daiker, and White 119-32.
- Hjortshoj, Keith. *The Transition to College Writing*. Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2001. Print.
- Imig, Stephanie. "Innovative Writing Instruction: Writing Rewired: Teaching Writing in an Online Setting." *The English Journal* 99.3 (2010): 80-83. *JSTOR*. 8 Feb. 2014.
- Jordan, Jeanette, et al. "Am I a Liar? The Angst of a High School English Teacher." Sullivan and Tinberg 36-40.
- Kim, Loel. "Online Technologies for Teaching Writing: Students React to Teacher Response in Voice and Written Modalities." *Research in the Teaching of English* 38.3 (2004): 304-337. *JSTOR*. Web. 3 April 2014.
- Krause, Kerri-Lee. "Supporting First-year Writing Development Online." *The Journal of General Education* 55.3-4 (2006): 201-220. *JSTOR*.
- Logsdon, Donald F., Jr. "Online Teaching Defended." Letter. *The American Biology Teacher* 64.1 (2002): 9. *JSTOR*. Web. 3 April 2014.

- National Center for Academic Transformation. "Tennessee Board of Regents: Developmental Redesign Initiative." *National Center for Academic Transformation*. NCAT, 1 June 2009. Web. 22 March 2015.
- Rendahl, Merry A. "It's Not *The Matrix*: Thinking about Online Writing Instruction." *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 42.1 (2009): 133-150. Print.
- Smith, Aaron. "Americans and Text Messaging." *PewResearchCenter*. Pew Research Center, 19 Sep. 2011. Web. 27 Feb. 2015.
- Tennessee Board of Regents. "General Education Requirements and Degree Requirements." *TBR*. TBR, n.d. Web. 27 Feb. 2015.
- Towle, Carroll S. "The Awkward Squad at Yale." *The English Journal* 18.8 (1929): 672-77. *JSTOR*. Web. 22 March 2015.
- Wadia, Minoo B. "Crap Hats: Approaches to Business Documents and Flyer Design." *South Central Modern Language Association*. Austin, TX. Oct. 2014. Address.
- Witte, Shelbie. "'That's Online Writing, Not Boring School Writing': Writing With Blogs and the Talkback Project." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 51.2 (2007): 92-96. *JSTOR*. Web. 8 Feb. 2014.

Annotated Bibliography

Austin Peay State University. *Academic Support Center Annual Report 2013-2014*.

This is the annual report produced by the Academic Support Center at Austin Peay State University. It contains detailed reports about students' performance in the SLA courses across disciplines and offers valuable insights into the SLA program as a whole.

Bader, Carol Hopper, and Carlette Jackson Hardin. "History of Developmental Studies in Tennessee." *Histories of Developmental Education* 2.1 (2002): 35-35. Web. 22 March 2015.

This article outlines the Tennessee Board of Regents' policies for developmental courses beginning in 1984. It provides an explanation of how the program was researched and implemented as well as information about changing standards and prerequisites for college courses. It also gives a brief history of the various changes that were made to TBR's policy up to the year 2001.

Bloom, Lynn Z., Donald A. Daiker, and Edward M. White, eds. *Composition in the Twenty-first Century: Crisis and Change*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1996. Print.

This anthology contains essays by prominent composition theorists. Though it is now nearly two decades old, the arguments and concerns remain valid and relevant to today's challenges.

Caillier, James Gerard. "The No Child Left Behind Act: "Are States on Target to Make Their Goals?" *The Journal of Negro Education* 76.4 (2007): 582-96. *JSTOR*. Web. 22 March 2014.

Caillier explains in detail how the NCLB Act affects schools and offers insight into how difficult it is for many schools to achieve the goals set out for them. He points to data that shows that only two states are on track to achieve the standards that NCLB outlined when it was enacted and offers possible reasons as to why this is.

Carr, Nicholas. *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*. New York: Norton, 2011. Print.

This book outlines the history of the written word and outlines recent neurological research into the effects of technology on the human brain. Carr explains the notion of neuroplasticity (that our brains are not static), and he specifically explores what this means for our brains as we rely increasingly on technology and the Internet for our information. The book provides valuable insight into the evolution of the human mind and intellect and offers sharp observations on the state of our culture today.

Clark-Ibañez, Marisol, and Linda Scott. "Learning to Teach Online." *Teaching Sociology*. 36.1 (2008): 34-41. *JSTOR*. Web. 3 April 2014.

This article systematically examines the benefits and challenges of teaching online and uses anonymous student evaluations of online classes to provide insight into what works and what doesn't. Additionally, the authors outline specific strategies for designing online curriculum, using the example of their own online course, Introduction

to Sociology, and emphasizing the fact that an online course cannot simply be converted from a regular course with no change to the curriculum and lesson plans. They specifically examine how to organize content, prepare students, use discussion boards, manage communication, and incorporate multimedia, and they discuss ways to evaluate an online course when it has concluded.

Connors, Robert J. "The Abolition Debate in Composition: A Short History." Bloom, Daiker, and White 47-63.

Connors offers a brief history of English Composition instruction, pointing out that the debate of whether or not to teach freshman composition has oscillated for over a century. He discusses reasons for changes in policies and viewpoints and gives his own predictions as to how the debate might change in the future. Though his essay is nearly twenty years old, his predictions that America's hypothetical involvement in an overseas conflict could affect the composition debate is eerily accurate.

Crowley, Sharon. "Around 1971: Current-Traditional Rhetoric and Process Models of Composing." Bloom, Daiker, and White 64-74.

Crowley discusses the shift from product- to process-oriented writing instruction in the 1970s and how that has continued to shape composition instruction through the years. She argues that a misunderstanding of the ancient rhetoric that it seeks to emulate can sometimes skew this current-traditional method.

Drake, Francis E. "Developmental Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 1.4 (1950): 3-6. *JSTOR*. Web. 27 March 2014.

Drake, an instructor at the Air University, outlines the teaching method the school employed in order to teach less-than-qualified students how to write more clearly and effectively. The cornerstone of their teaching philosophy is to have the students teach themselves and each other as much as possible through peer review, both so that the teachers are not as overwhelmed and so that the students learn how to hold themselves accountable.

Dubson, Michael. "Whose Paper Is This, Anyway? Why Most Students Don't Embrace the Writing They Do for Their Writing Classes." Sullivan and Tinberg 92-109.

Dubson examines the reasons that students in writing courses care only about the grade they make and not about the writing they are doing. He discusses why students do not feel personally connected to their writing assignments or care about improving their work. Most compellingly, Dubson points to the lack of emphasis on writing in our general culture, and how this directly contradicts the fact that writing is far from dead, giving students a skewed perspective of the importance of written communication. His examination of larger cultural trends that affect students' behavior and motivation is particularly valuable.

Durrington, Vance A., Amy Berryhill, and Jeanne Swafford. "Strategies for Enhancing Student Interactivity in an Online Environment." *College Teaching* 54.1 (2006): 190-193. *JSTOR*. Web. 3 April 2014.

Much like the article from the *Teaching Sociology*, this article offers specific strategies for increasing student engagement in an online classroom. To strengthen their article, the authors point to research that suggests that students learn better the more they are engaged in an online course. They specifically outline ways of increasing student activity by providing an informal FAQ discussion section, using asynchronous discussions mediated by the instructor, instituting student-moderated discussion strategies and utilizing problem-based learning. The authors assert that these particular components create key interactions from student-to-instructor as well as student-to-student and that these interactions are what make an online classroom more effective.

Dutro, Elizabeth. "What 'Hard Times' Means: Mandated Curricula, Class-Privileged Assumptions, and the Lives of Poor Children." *Research in the Teaching of English* 44.3 (2010): 255-91. Print.

Dutro examines the ways in which mandated curriculum contains content which assumes that all students are living in a stable, middle-class home environment. She recounts her experience working with a class of third-graders who live in extreme poverty but are reading texts which treat poverty as a temporary, historical situation, rather than a very real and present problem. Her findings show that these students have a very different reaction to the curriculum than what was intended because of their personal experiences and the ways in which they relate to the text.

Gentile, James M. "College-Level Writing: A Departmental Perspective." Sullivan and Tinberg 311-29.

As an administrator, Gentile offers his perspective on freshman composition courses and their place in the university curriculum. He discusses why it is difficult to come up with a concrete definition of college-level writing, as well as the many aspects departments must address when teaching these composition courses. He examines the ways that institutions may structure their freshman composition curriculum with regards to prerequisites, syllabi, and general requirements.

Gere, Anne Ruggles. "The Long Revolution in Composition." Bloom, Daiker, and White 119-32.

Gere offers insight into the various trends in teaching composition and the challenges facing those who teach writing courses. She discusses student attitudes towards writing as well as administrative attitudes towards writing instructors. Gere finishes by presenting strategies for teaching and collaborating and argues in favor of closer inspections and evaluations of writing programs on a local and regional level.

Hjortshoj, Keith. *The Transition to College Writing*. Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2001.
Print.

Hjortshoj's helpful guide is designed to give high school students an idea of what to expect in their freshman composition courses. He outlines what qualities instructors will expect their students' writing to have, as well as common assignments and methods of feedback. This book offers a helpful look at what information high school students have available to them to help them in their transition from secondary to higher education.

Imig, Stephanie. "Innovative Writing Instruction: Writing Rewired: Teaching Writing in an Online Setting." *The English Journal* 99.3 (2010): 80-83. *JSTOR*. 8 Feb. 2014.

This article outlines strategies used for teaching an online writing class at the high school level. Imig specifically used synchronous lessons in which all students were able to chat and participate in discussion with both her and the other students as they learned. In this way, Imig tried to mirror a normal classroom setting as much as possible, and found that students who missed the synchronous lessons felt that they had missed out on a sense of community.

Jordan, Jeanette, et al. "Am I a Liar? The Angst of a High School English Teacher."

Sullivan and Tinberg 36-40.

Jordan, a high school English teacher, describes the stresses of attempting to teach high school students what they will need to know for college-level writing courses without the benefit of being told what those courses will expect. She explains that her main source of information is usually former students who keep in touch or return to visit and tell her what their college courses asked of them. Jordan makes an important point and calls for more communication from colleges about what their standards of acceptable writing are.

Kim, Loel. "Online Technologies for Teaching Writing: Students React to Teacher Response in Voice and Written Modalities." *Research in the Teaching of English* 38.3 (2004): 304-337. *JSTOR*. Web. 3 April 2014.

This article reports the results of a study of how students respond to both vocal and written feedback of their writing in order better to understand the ways in which online teaching can benefit or hinder students' learning. The researchers used texts that had been pre-seeded with certain writing problems and asked freshman college students to react to the responses given by the teachers who read them. The author cited a previous study that found that students' reactions to written responses are typically influenced most by whether they feel the instructor is credible and likeable. Studies done as far back as the 1970s indicate that students tend to respond more favorably to vocal feedback because they feel it is easier to understand and that they are receiving more personal attention from the instructor. The author points out that the practice of audiotaping feedback has not been widely adopted and points to the lack of convenience as the probable cause.

Krause, Kerri-Lee. "Supporting First-year Writing Development Online." *The Journal of General Education* 55.3-4 (2006): 201-220. *JSTOR*.

This article outlines a study conducted by the author and her colleagues which assessed the usefulness of online supplementary writing instruction. The study was conducted as a survey of willing participants who responded to a pre-test and a post-test questionnaire in which they evaluated their perception of their own writing skills. Researchers also used quantitative data gathered from usage statistics and final grade reports.

Logsdon, Donald F., Jr. "Online Teaching Defended." Letter. *The American Biology Teacher* 64.1 (2002): 9. JSTOR. Web. 3 April 2014.

This is a short letter to the editor in which the writer defends online teaching by discussing the difference ways it can be implemented. He decries the type of online teaching outlined in an earlier issue of the journal and argues that using an online classroom effectively actually allows teachers and students to have more one-on-one interaction than a traditional classroom. He specifically advocates the use of discussion boards and presentations.

National Center for Academic Transformation. "Tennessee Board of Regents:

Developmental Redesign Initiative." *National Center for Academic Transformation*. NCAT, 1 June 2009. Web. 22 March 2015.

This report from the NCAT outlines the structure for the SLA redesign of 2007 across the disciplines. While it focuses primarily on the math program, the information is also applicable to the developmental writing courses. It offers specific information on the course structure as well as information on the inspiration for the new model.

Rendahl, Merry A. "It's Not *The Matrix*: Thinking about Online Writing Instruction." *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 42.1 (2009): 133-150.

Print.

This article is an argument in favor of embracing online teaching or at least an argument not to fear it. While the author does admit the benefits of traditional teaching, she points out that the changing technological nature of the world and asserts that

teachers will do more for their students by doing their best to teach online, rather than resist the change, leaving students in the lurch. Rendahl presents the concept of re-defining the classroom to include the increasing number of people who opt for online classes.

Smith, Aaron. "Americans and Text Messaging." *PewResearchCenter*. Pew Research Center, 19 Sep. 2011. Web. 27 Feb. 2015.

An article explaining statistics showing the percentage of Americans who use text messaging and, specifically, the percentage who prefer text messages to phone calls. Of note is also the percentage of Americans who do not make or take a phone call on their cell phone in a typical day. Smith highlights the idea that Americans are increasingly reliant on digital, written communication rather than verbal.

Sullivan, Patrick, and Howard Tinberg, eds. *What Is "College-Level" Writing?* Urbana: NCTE, 2006. Print.

This book contains essays by both college and high school writing teachers. It addresses current concerns and debates within the field of writing instruction.

Tennessee Board of Regents. "General Education Requirements and Degree Requirements." *TBR*. TBR, n.d. Web. 27 Feb. 2015.

This is TBR's official document outlining restrictions on general course requirements and how they affect a student's degree progress.

Towle, Carroll S. "The Awkward Squad at Yale." *The English Journal* 18.8 (1929): 672-77. *JSTOR*. Web. 22 March 2015.

This article outlines the implementation and process of the Awkward Squad in Freshman English at Yale during the 1920s. Towle offers a detailed account of how the program is structured with specific examples of assignments, typical class meetings, and methods of feedback. She provides anecdotal evidence of student improvement and touches on the enigmatic nature of college writing standards. Though this article is now 86 years old, the instructional methods are markedly similar to the Austin Peay's SLA labs, with the notable difference of their names.

Wadia, Minoo B. "Crap Hats: Approaches to Business Documents and Flyer Design." *South Central Modern Language Association*. Austin, TX. Oct. 2014. Address.

Wadia's lecture focuses on effective design for documents, flyers, and visual presentations. He gives examples of design elements that have been proven to more effectively draw the viewer's eye and optimize information retention. Though he did not specifically address using these methods for handouts, I found his advice very helpful when updating my teaching materials for all of my courses.

Witte, Shelbie. "'That's Online Writing, Not Boring School Writing': Writing With Blogs and the Talkback Project." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 51.2 (2007): 92-96. *JSTOR*. Web. 8 Feb. 2014.

The author of this article examines the effectiveness of using online blogs as a means of getting students engaged in writing. After noticing that one of her students who

hated turning in assignments loved writing on her blog, the author teamed up with a university professor to teach a joint middle school/graduate student course inspired by a program she learned about at a conference. The graduate students (who were studying education) were able to practice responding to students' work while the middle school students gained writing experience in an online environment with which they were familiar.