ONLINE DISCUSSION BOARDS FOSTER CRITICAL VIEWS IN STUDENTS’ RESEARCH WRITING

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ONLINE DISCUSSION BOARDS FOSTER CRITICAL VIEWS IN STUDENTS’ RESEARCH WRITING

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ABSTRACT

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Technology is becoming an essential tool in everyday lifestyles. Daily tasks are now utilizing phones, computers, televisions, and game systems for social interaction, individual achievement or entertainment, and education. School systems are integrating more technology in classrooms and instruction to meet the demands of an expanding digital society. Twenty-three eighth grade students participated in the study, which observed how blogs can foster audience awareness and revision during students’ research paper writing process. While conducting peer conferencing on research papers, students’ blog posts were observed and analyzed. According to the questionnaires and blog comment analysis, students preferred peer conferencing through blogs. In a comparison of the face-to-face conferencing groups to the blog groups, blog responses had greater detail, resulting in constant dialogue and sustained problem-solving rhetorical solutions in students’ peer comments. From the twenty-three participants, two case studies were developed from two students who have different learning levels, but benefited academically through the blog. The two case studies demonstrated that students attained
success as writers, readers, and motivators for others through the blog. This suggests that
the online discussion boards can be a useful tool for the classroom instruction of research
writing.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Historical Perspective of Technology Integration within School Systems

Over the past ten years the United States’ technology education programs have developed rapidly, emphasizing and focusing on curriculum designed to ensure technology literacy (Rasinen 31). According to Aki Rasinen, technology literacy is defined as “knowing how to use, manage, and understand technology” and more importantly to recognize technology’s function in society (39). As early as 1989, curriculum and evaluation standards were revised in various core subjects, English, Social Studies, Mathematics, Science, and Arts, requiring technology in student learning. Technology was never a state standard in core subjects requiring teachers to teach and measure their students understanding of technology. Students used technology to facilitate their learning; they were not evaluated on their knowledge of the technology. Early implementation of technology in middle and high schools involved PC’s, Microsoft Office or desktop publishing as a tool for publishing and presentation. Students word processed papers, developed PowerPoint presentations, and used the internet for research. In 2000, a technology education standard was introduced giving school systems the opportunity for teachers to pursue developmental workshops in order to implement more
technology in the classroom (39). Computers in today’s schools are used for more than producing homework, assignments, and presentations. Students are accessing homework through websites, dialoguing with classmates and teachers through blogs and web-cameras, and publishing their work on the internet. This emphasis of technology integration in school systems is due to the impact of technological literacy in the world.

Over the past two decades, more companies, scientists, manufacturers, and governments are communicating, buying, selling, and building with technology. In the last ten years, education systems at points around the world--East Asia, Australia, England, and Finland--have established new curricula and standards within their school programs in order to develop students’ technology literacy and apply their knowledge in society (Lee 146). The impact of technology literacy on the world’s education systems is due to growth of “information and communication technology” (115). In order for countries to become leaders in communication and technology, or at least continue the world’s technological dialogue, they need to build their technological literacy. To learn technological literacy and new mediums of communication, education is a necessity.

In American classrooms, students’ literacies, reading and writing, are parallel with technology. Students should be receiving as much education with technology as with more traditional subjects, i.e. reading and writing. According to Kristen H. Turner and Elvira K. Katic, “Today’s learners can be described as digital natives being born and raised in a culture saturated in technology where students are greatly influenced and fluent in technology language” (255). These learners can identify with curriculum juxtaposed with technology, such as conducting research on the web, publishing a multimedia presentation or conducting a reader-response through a blog. The students
“draw on relevant social and cultural understandings” through familiar technological literacies and devices in order to “interpret and produce meaning within a particular context, task or environment” (255). In other words, students can learn or translate ideas easier through mediums with which they are familiar, and in present times, paper and pencil are becoming less familiar to students.

**Technology and Writing Processes**

Technology is becoming a motivating tool for student learning since it is an essential part of their lives, as both a social and educational device. Students are building their technology literacy because they are utilizing technology daily, which is resulting in students using two literacies in their daily lives, technological and instructional. Technology literacy is the student’s knowledge of technology terminology, communication language, such as texting or Instant Messaging (IM’ing), and the language of online media programs. Instructional literacy is the student’s ability to read and write at the grade and content level. Students are beginning to associate their technology literacy with their instructional literacy. This combination is seen in students’ writing and ‘text language,’ for example the use of ‘u’ instead of ‘you’ in their academic writing. Students associate their technology literacy with instructional literacy because technology is a part of their lives. In the past, students’ out-of-school literacy learning tools would were novels, articles, and other print genres. Today, out-of-school literacy is primarily online: websites, journals, chatrooms, wikis, forums, blogs, and e-mail. These are used as a social means involving some form of reading and writing (Williams 703).
However, because of the success of websites, chatrooms, blogs, and e-mail as out-of-school literacies these forms are now becoming part of an in-school instruction.

Technology is becoming a means of reading and writing even more than in the past. Teachers have begun recognizing the importance of technology integration and student learning, specifically student learning in regards to their familiarization and problem solving. For instance, if a student does not know how to perform a function on a computer, such as installing a computer program, she will learn it because it is a necessary tool to move forward in society. Take for instance, the teenager who receives a new cell phone for her birthday. She will figure out how to use all the phone’s functions—texting, camera, e-mail, Facebook application, phone book—because she wants to be in contact with her friends and the world. The motivation to learn how to use and be in touch with her peers through the new technology encourages her to learn about the program. This example can be applied with students’ reading and writing instruction; students are following a process when learning technology, similar to writing. They follow a decoding process learning the material and how to apply it toward the program, similar to brainstorming or planning. Translation of the data and application toward the technology are needed. Reviewing the process is then applied in order to evaluate if the process was a success or failure to tell if any steps need to be repeated. Technology integration can offer similar processes in student writing.

Technology integration can develop similar activities as writing instruction. For the girl and her new cell phone, in order for her to get her phone activated she had to plan a set up process. Similar to the writing process, she had to develop some form of planning or brainstorming in order to get her phone, or ideas, functioning. During the activation, as
she was installing data, applications, and phone numbers into her phone book, she was translating and evaluating what information to input into her device. If she input incorrect or irrelevant information or data she could end up with unnecessary charges on her bill.

In the writing process, the writer carefully chooses ideas relevant and supportive to the subject; unnecessary ideas distort the writer’s contextual meaning. The girl was also consistently evaluating and revising while inputting data: setting up displays, ring tones, font, and background pictures. Audience is a factor in technology, as it is in writing because the girl has to evaluate what others, such as her peers, are going to think about her new phone. The appeal extends from the cell phone cover to the pictures, ringtone, and application settings. The activation of a cell phone is comparable to the writing process: planning, translating, evaluating, revising, and applying audience awareness while composing and evaluating a written piece. The overall goal for both the cell phone and a composition is the same: Does the writing reflect who I am, but also make people interested?

According to the research conducted by Linda Flower and John R. Hayes, a writer follows a three phase process model: planning, translating, and reviewing. The writer follows this model in a recursive pattern throughout the writing process (277). Kristen H. Turner and Elvira K. Katic employed Flower and Hayes’ theory of recursive writing process in a technology setting and discovered that students’ cognitive writing process followed non-linear writing and students’ technology literacies affected their non-linear decisions, such as “cut and paste,” “deleting,” and “move it around” (262). Student writers knew that the technology enabled them to move text around and look at research with greater ease than without it; students maintained a consistent pattern of planning,
translating, and reviewing. Because of the technology available to students, the planning stage incorporated researching the internet for information to support their argument. Flower and Hayes’ is similar to the cognitive learning process students demonstrate when utilizing technology in their problem-solving. This connection suggests that teaching writing through technology can enforce the same cognitive abilities as writing with pencil and paper.

### Teaching Writing through Blogs

Blogs are becoming one of the popular technology tools integrated into classrooms that foster, evaluate and teach writing. The online threaded discussions Blogger, Blackboard, Moodle, and Bulletin Board are popular ways for students and teachers to maintain the learning environment after school hours and beyond the classroom walls (English 56). Weblogs have been used in the writing classroom as journals, research tools, and communication centers to share ideas. Students use the blog as an opportunity to “exchange (their) points of view with the rest of the world not just the people in (their) immediate environment” (Downes 1). This “educational blogging” enables students to find their own voices, motivates students to engage in their ideas, provides a notion of audience awareness, and stimulates the initiative to write in a collaborative environment, which “engenders information sharing, reputation building, and personal expression” (Middlebrook).

Stephen Downes defines blogging by “format and process” (2). Similar to Flower and Hayes’ recursive cognitive writing process, bloggers maintain a consistent planning, translating and reviewing writing pattern. However, there are other elements added and
intertwined in the writing process of blogs: external hypertext (pictures and video clips) and links, other bloggers’ reviews, comments, and posts on each other’s texts. Bloggers do not have to compose a structured text because hypertext is provided for support and further detail. There is also an element of reader-response interlinked with personal response. Bloggers are motivated to share or springboard their ideas from other readers because they know other readers are interested in reading their thoughts and providing further comments. When blogging, the writer is not conducting an individualized text, such as writing a text to be evaluated by one teacher; the blogger is writing for an audience that is large and undefined. Consequently, they learn different perspectives, how to react and respond to different views, and gain audience awareness unlike one could build in a conventional classroom environment.

Rhetoric, classical as it was used in ancient Greece and Rome, depended upon the community. Individuals were not focused solely upon how they contributed toward the community. Communication was formed through communities and the message was from the community, not necessarily an individual. Since the development of the alphabet, printed text, and now electronic technologies, communication is becoming faster and individualized. Community takes on a different form and audience in a mass medium. If a community does not adapt or learn the means of communication, they become disconnected from the society. Recalling the example of the girl with the new cell phone, if she never learns how to use a cell phone, we can speculate that it will be difficult for her to communicate with her friends, considering how popular cell phones are becoming and replacing technology such as the house phone. Learning how to use the cell phone is similar to learning how to communicate effectively through technology; if
students do not learn how to write through technology, they will be disconnected from society. Letter writing and cards are being replaced with e-mails, e-cards, and evites because they are faster and easier. As society becomes more digitalized, communication will be conducted through and by technology addressing a larger audience. When communicating through technology, Walter Ong explains that from the writer’s perspective “the audience is simply further away, in time or space or both,” as a result, the writer’s distance from the audience through technology will become even more detached (57). Therefore, students need to develop or “know how to play the game of being a member of a (fictional) audience” in order to address an audience within a readers’ community of ambiguity and large size (Ede and Lunsford, 83). Technology is the best tool to use to help students learn or evaluate audience awareness.

Blogs are becoming more popular in teaching writing. John Benson and Jessica Reyman use blogs with writing tasks that help teach the concepts of audience awareness, “anticipat[ing] audience needs, backgrounds, and perceptions.” In addition, students develop responsibility and accountability in their online discussions and publishing because their writing is reaching wide and unknown audiences (Benson and Reyman). A web audience is very important in order to achieve success, and web writers have to be able to develop awareness to keep the community interested and “listening” to what needs to be read. Rather than the typical written paper, written for one audience, the teacher, students that write within a networked world can maintain multiple audiences.

Students writing on a blog all have an equal voice within the conversation. Teachers believe that the classroom should provide an equal learning environment for all students, which should also entail allowing a voice for each student. For instance, in a
classroom environment, there are students who participate often and are observed as outgoing while there are also students who never participate and are perceived as shy. On the blog, these juxtaposed students have an equal opportunity “where students who aren’t interrupted and talked over, can really flesh out their ideas” to share their thoughts through written dialogue (English 59). The shy, timid student has the same writing space to voice her opinion as any other student. Through the discussions students are creating a “more equitable environment than exists in the classroom, allowing students to participate without the degree of social positioning that some researchers have identified … within collaborative groups” (59). Therefore, blogs foster collaboration and support the learning theory articulated by socio-epistemic theorist, Kenneth Bruffee.

According to Bruffee, peer tutoring and similar modes to peer criticism can be classified under collaborative learning (637). Collaborative learning is an indirect instruction by the teacher through students’ combined effort to teach through learning. Bruffee illustrates the element of peer criticism within collaborative learning and that “it did not seem to change what people learned so much as it changed the social context in which they learned it” (638). Bruffee found that “students’ work improved when they got help from peers; peers offering help, furthermore, learned from the students they helped and from the activity of helping itself” (638). Cathie English’s study on students’ voice in her fiction writing class’ reader-response blog found that all students in her class, the quiet and outspoken, were motivated in posting responses and constructive criticism toward their peers’ writing. Rather than in a classroom environment where the customary participating students answer the questions, the blog provided a stage for the reserved students to voice their opinions and knowledge. Therefore, student participants voicing
their opinions on the prompts and class readings provided more writing and comments than in-class writing assignments. The blog provided an equal collaborative learning environment that allowed all students a voice. English’s research compared students’ reader-response posts and then student peer responses. She analyzed the criticisms to “elicit deeper thinking on part of the students” and “receive peer affirmation” (58). Examining both the student response and the peer criticism, the dialogues were “inspiring” due to the questions provoked by students for further writing, revisions, and the constructive criticism provided by peers (58).

English’s study was on a fictional writing course. What if this pedagogy was applied to non-fictional writing? English’s students demonstrated that students provide the constructive peer criticisms about writing that encourages further revisions and reflective processes. However, her study did not show the revisions students made based on their peers’ responses. If their dialogue and criticisms were beneficial to their writing and if students maintained their peer dialogue on the blog throughout the writing process, would they develop a critical distance between themselves and their text in order to revise their own writing? Throughout the blog, English’s students create a distance with their peers, while collaborating with one another, developing a further understanding and new critical awareness about their writing and revising process.

Kenneth Bruffee believes that “the position of writing relative to conversation is more complex than the position of thought relative to conversation” (641). The conversations students have through blog writing help them develop voice, audience awareness, and collaboration. Through a written expression on the blog rather than a personal oral communication, students are developing as writers, and researchers are
examining the engagement and writing development of motivated blog writers (Brooks et al 3). I question, along with other researchers, the impact of students’ written conversations and the development of students’ writing. If writing is a means of communication as Bruffee explains, students “internalize conversation” in order to organize their thoughts; “then by writing” externalize their ideas through conversation, developing a “social medium” (641). Therefore, students are learning composition through one another and their internal and written conversations. According to Kathleen West and her study of “Weblogs and Literary Response,” students’ technological literacy does not “sacrifice the situational identity of serious literature students. Integrating the social language of formal literary analysis with…digital social language,” only reinforces their learning (596). These scholars’ work suggests that technology and literary analysis can be instruction with one another without the loss of any learning. The suggestion that students’ technological literacy transfers to relevant educational tasks such as research, journals, and sharing ideas raises several important questions:

1). Do student online discussion board conversations foster critical views (awareness) of writing a research paper?

2). If so, how are these critical views characterized?

3). And to what degree do online discussion boards facilitate the teaching of research papers?
Methods

Participants

Twenty-three students from my eighth grade language arts classes participated in a blog developed from the online program Blogger.com. The school district’s class structure of language arts classes are in blocked periods; therefore instead of a typical one period class of forty-five minutes, students are in class for a continuing two periods, ninety minutes. In order to develop an outside “community” within the blog, the twenty-three students, from the three different blocked periods maintain dialogue with one another rather than developing three separate blogs for each class block.

At the beginning of the year, students from all my classes were asked to participate, on a volunteer basis, in a reader-response blog, conducted as a pilot study. The twenty-three students participated in the reader-response blog. Students posted twice every four weeks in response to their independent reading novels, including hypertext, links, and pictures. In addition, students were encouraged to read and respond to their peers’ posts. Unlike other blog programs and research that provide anonymity, the students did not have pseudonyms as their screen names. Therefore, students knew who was commenting on their posts or whose work they chose to comment on. I made this decision to make administration and grading easier. In addition, students knew the peers that were making comments, suggestions, and constructive criticisms for their posts. Therefore, students had to consider their critical approach in their responses toward their peers. Students were not discussing their journals and novels face-to-face; eliminating the
peer interaction through the blog. The elimination of the face-to-face communication enabled students to become more aware of their writing and communication. Students successfully maintained this dialogue for three quarters or twenty-four weeks.

The students that volunteered to participate in the reader-response blog were asked to participate in the second study due to their knowledge of the blog program and the discourse encouraged within the blog community. Before conducting my research, I went through the Institutional Review Board, received off-campus approval through my administrator, and received parental consent forms verifying that both students and parents understood the nature of the research was confidential, voluntary, and under my administration; therefore the school’s Code of Conduct and Internet Safety rules are enforced.

Methods of Measurements

Students are measured in six ways:

1). Pre-survey questionnaires were distributed to participating blog students at the first day of research paper instruction (Appendix A).

2). Post-survey questionnaires were distributed to participating blog students when they turned in their final research paper (Appendix B). The pre- and post-survey questionnaires provided me the data to perform a quantitative statistical analysis on the participating blog students. The questionnaires also served as a rhetorical analysis to compare with the students’ comments.

3). During the six week research paper writing I posted four blog prompts (Appendix D-G), which students used to guide their peer conferencing. Some students
have a difficult time knowing what to look for when conferencing, therefore the prompts provide a guide for the students. The same blog prompts were also distributed to the students not participating in the blog, which were utilized in their face-to-face conferencing. The participating students’ blog responses were rhetorically analyzed into two categories; content and lexical comments, which were coded with Benjamin Bloom’s “Revised Taxonomy” chart of cognitive thinking levels.

4). The collaborative process of students provided data measuring the different types of dialogues among students. The number of comments students’ made, how students commented or peer conferenced with one another, revision processes, and awareness in audience were also examined through the blog.

5). Classroom observations were conducted throughout the learning process. The observations were taken as field notes after each class block. These observations provided the basis for comparison of the face-to-face conferencing students and the blog students. They also provided for analysis of emotional and behavioral response.

6). Informal interviews were used for my personal clarity of the students’ emotional response when completing the blog assignments. Five informal interviews were conducted. One interview was conducted with an administrator to ask permission for administering the blog research to the two suspension students. The other four interviews were with students.

Questionnaires

Students were provided a questionnaire (Appendix A) before the start of the research paper instruction, asking their previous knowledge of “What is research
writing?” Eighth grade is the first year middle school students are introduced to the research writing process, such as developing a research question, gathering information, organizing their information, employing MLA formatting, and synthesizing their information to support their thesis. The questionnaire indicates what the students know before instruction took place in the classroom and dialogue on the blog. Therefore, I can designate what students have learned and applied collaboratively through the blog.

Similar questionnaire prompts (Appendix B) were administered at the conclusion of the students’ research paper. This questionnaire indicates the students’ previous knowledge of writing and peer revision, how students’ perceived learning research writing and peer revision through the blog, comments students’ received, and students’ peer revision preferences. I statistically and rhetorically analyzed this data and compared it with the responses and collaborative dialogue students conducted with one another.

Responses to Prompts and Students’ Collaborative Process

Each week, students were provided a series of prompts (Appendix D) that encouraged peer review while conducting their research writing process. Students responded to the prompts and responded to their peers’ posts. This collaborative process was encouraged throughout the research writing process. Students posted comments while developing their research question, discuss sources, plan outlines, draft and revise. Students revise their papers into the blog and peers revise or suggest how to improve the author’s work. Students are instructed on the research writing processes and methods within the class setting. Students that do not participate in the blog receive only teacher and in class peer review; students on the blog have multiple peer reviews on each topic.
The students’ participation on the blog was evaluated similar to the students that did not volunteer to participate on the blog. The students’ peer comments and responses to the prompts were the same tasks as the students that did not volunteer to write through the blog.

The data collected from the questionnaires and blog comments provide a perspective from the students conducting peer revision through the blog and students’ personal critical awareness of their research writing. When I compared the students’ post-questionnaire (Appendix B) with their comments I analyzed their comments on the questionnaire as to what peer criticisms were the most helpful to students, and if that was apparent in the students’ revisions and writing. This analysis process answers and defines the students’ critical awareness. I will identify the specific comments or suggestions students recognize as useful to revise their research writing in my results.

The observations were conducted throughout the data gathering process. I wrote field notes on the days students worked on peer conferencing or blog posting in class. I noted any significant observations between the face-to-face conferencing students and the blog conferencing students. For future references I made notations of problems with the program or any student comments or suggestions about the blog process.
CHAPTER II

A QUANTITIVE LOOK AT AUDIENCE AND REVISION

The study was conducted in the spring of 2011, during the fourth quarter of the students’ school year at rural school district in Ohio. The twenty-three students who volunteered to participate in the pilot program were asked to participate in the research study, due to their knowledge of the blog program. In order for students to adequately revise and be measured on their revision processes through the blog, students had to have a certain comfort level with the blog program in order to participate in the study. The eighth grade students are learning research writing at a more complex level than previous years. During this fourth quarter, students learned research writing processes. Based on Ohio Department of Education’s curriculum, students are expected to learn how to develop a research question, form a thesis statement, gather sources, integrate internal citations, create multiple drafts, and revise. For my study, participating students were also to post steps of their research paper through the blog program for peers to review.

In the pre-survey questionnaire, students were asked their knowledge of research in order to further measure their previous knowledge of research (Appendix A, Question #3). Only five out of twenty-three (22%) students expressed a strong understanding of research writing, which defined research as “coming up with a question…go on the internet and look for an answer to your question…draft papers” (questionnaire). The other eighteen (78%) students included generalized or specific steps within the process,
such as the gathering process: “you can ask a professional,” “look up the topic online,” “read about the topic in a book” (questionnaire). Students also made a generalized statement, “pick a topic, find out about it, present” consisting of a list of research processes (questionnaire). Results from the questionnaires suggest that students understood the purpose of research, a broad concept to conducting it, but needed scaffolding toward producing the specific process.

The final study’s results, including the post-survey questionnaire, concluded with nineteen students. One student decided not to participate and sign the consent form, another had technical difficulties with his user name and password in order to sign into the Blogger program, and two other students began the blog program, but did not finish due to a school suspension. Throughout the study, my role was teaching the research writing process and posting the prompts onto the blog for the participants or distributing the prompts to the students that decided not to participate in the study.

My teaching methods toward research writing were consistent for each class period, only varying to the degree in which further elaboration was needed for the student body. There were two different types of conference groups. Students on the blog could comment on anyone’s writing; they were not restricted to students in their class and were open to the different class blocks. The other conference groups were the face-to-face sessions in which students in the same class were paired with one another to discuss their writing. All handouts, outlines, notes, and bibliography tools (i.e., NoodleTools) were the same for each class period. More importantly, the peer conferencing prompts that were posted on the blog were the same prompts the face-to-face conferencing students answered (Appendix D-G). From my observations while circulating the room during peer
conferencing, students that were on the blog were more on task than the students face-to-face conferencing. On task is illustrated as reading their peers’ feeds, providing comments and suggestions toward their peers, not talking to other students, and not researching irrelevant information on the computer. The face-to-face conferencing groups had to refocus their conferencing conversations often while the blog maintained the peer interaction without the personal connection eliminating any possible distractions. Students also felt that the blog was a better method to conduct peer conferencing.

In the post-survey questionnaire, seventeen out of the nineteen participating (89%) students prefer the blog to face-to-face peer conferencing. Nine of the nineteen students (47%) felt that utilizing the blog was “quicker,” “easier,” and “convenient” (questionnaire). Students thought it was “quicker” and “easier” because there were fewer papers involved due to the peer conferencing prompts and tasks provided and because the review was performed through a computer rather than at a desk using papers. The blog allowed students to read and possibly respond to every student’s work in one area, which made it possible never to lose an assignment. Students also felt they could “type faster, responding and writing more through a computer” rather than in person with a pencil and paper (questionnaire). In addition, the blog was accessed through the internet; therefore students could “comment on other people’s work at home or anywhere else that you have Internet access” (questionnaire).

Students’ comfort is why five out of nineteen (26%) students of the positive blog responders also preferred the blog conferencing because it eliminates the personal connections. Students felt the elimination of personal connections promoted honest feedback, similar to the online and technological programs students are familiar with
today, (i.e. Facebook, MySpace, texting). Blog participants preferred conferencing on the blog because of elimination of the face-to-face contact. These blog conferencing students said that they could “really say what you mean (on the blog) and its harder to do that face to face” (questionnaire). Students felt they had more self-expression, honesty, and were “not put on the spot” through the blog (questionnaire). However, not all students prefer the elimination of personal connections.

Two out of nineteen (10.5%) students preferred face-to-face conferencing. They felt that it is easier to explain the information or comments received in person because when a reader can orally explain herself, it is “not so confusing” (questionnaire).

Supporting John Benson and Jessica Reyman’s study of audience and writing publicly, the preference for face-to-face conferencing and oral feedback suggests that students who prefer this method or are oral learners may struggle in a digital environment, such as publishing on a blog. These two students discovered their preferred learning and conferencing was not through written expression but as oral expression.

The blog may produce a more productive learning environment when it comes down to utilizing instructional time and student preference. Students preferred the blog to face-to-face conferencing and achieved more work during class than the face-to-face conferencing groups. But, do blogs enable student discovery of learning behaviors and style. Do they foster audience awareness and peer revision?
Fostering Audience and Revision

Audience

One of the goals of the study was to examine students’ ability to identify problems within their peers’ and their own research writing. Students developed a significantly more specific scope of audience after writing their research papers through the blog. Comparing the data from their pre- and post-survey questionnaires, students narrowed a broad audience of “teacher, reader, boss, scientists, classmates, parents, self, anyone, and I don’t know” to very specific “teacher, reader, researcher” resulting in a significant shift in critical awareness in audience (Appendix A, B, #4). In the pre-survey, eight students thought the research was for the “teacher,” seven for the “reader,” seven for “anyone,” six for the “self,” four for “classmates” (questionnaire). The post-survey illustrates that thirteen students believe research is for the “reader,” eight believe it is for the “researcher,” and six believe it is for the “teacher because she grades it” (questionnaire). In both instances, the pre- and post-surveys, students believe that research is designed for the reader, “anyone who wants to learn about the topic,” and the self; the teacher is the lowest perceived audience. This shift of values, from students valuing one another as readers over the teacher as an audience is because the blog allows students to learn from one another. Rather than the typical notion of pupil learning from a teacher, through the blog students are learning from students. Richard Straub researched the effects of teacher comments on students and that “all teacher comments exert control over student writing” (99). Since students are taking more authoritarian roles as readers
through the blog, commenting on their peers’ writing, teaching and learning from each
other’s comments, is this influencing the change in audience?

Specifically focusing on the shift in critical awareness of audience, students also
narrowed their perspective of audience, eliminating any outside audiences listed in their
pre-survey questionnaire, such as “boss, scientist, parent, classmates,” and specifically
limiting toward the blog or technical world of “reader, researcher, and teacher”
(questionnaire). Even though students were not anonymous through the blog, not one
student referred to their audience as their “classmate” in their post-survey; the students
changed their terminology to “reader” (questionnaire). In addition, since students
maintained a consistent dialogue with their peers through the blog, the term “reader”
increased 46% from seven to thirteen students in the pre- and post-survey as the research
audience. Students’ ideas of the researcher or self was maintained consistently from the
pre- and post-survey, but the concept of “teacher” as audience showed a 25% decrease, I
attribute this change to the students heightened awareness in their peers’ or “reader”
comments in order to facilitate their revisions. This decrease in “teacher” as audience
exemplifies peers assuming a teacher’s role. When examining the teacher’s comments on
students’ papers, Straub argues that “during the time the students read a set of comments,
the image of the teacher that comes off the page becomes the teacher for that student…”
(100). Students know peers are making comments through the blog and the comments are
useful in their revisions, this is the key shift in students’ critical awareness in audience.

Is this change in their classmate’s roles determining their audience? Classmates providing
useful instructional comments are changing student’s perspective in audience. Therefore,
in a blog setting, the students’ audiences of readers are also facilitators developing their task at hand.

Revision

A more complex understanding of audience also developed students’ awareness of their peers’ comments. Students began to focus upon their peers’ comments and their reader-response. Instead of students writing for their own individual interpretations and readings, students’ view of audience developed, which lead toward revision. For instance, after students revised their second drafts they self-graded their papers. A self-grade provides students with an estimate of their paper’s position. Students were also to explain their grade, if the grade was reflective of the student’s effort, and the strengths and weaknesses of the paper (Appendix G). One student responded to her grade, “I need to work on citing my paragraphs and using more of my own ideas. I need to elaborate on some of my details. I also need to work on making my paragraphs flow into each other more.” Even though the rubric states that the paper needs citations, paragraphs, and clear ideas, this student was also aware that she needs to reexamine her content in order for her readers to understand her ideas. In addition, students began to become more aware of their own responses to their peers’ writing. This improvement of reader-response and revisions is exhibited through the prompt responses and peer comments. Students’ tasks were to post their own writings on the blog for the conference days. The students’ writings were to consist of the research question, outline, and drafts. To execute a successful conference through the blog, a student read a peer’s post and answered the prompt. The prompt’s response provided constructive feedback and comment specifically
on peers’ writing. Students were only prompted to answer one other student’s post, but many students would comment on more than one peer. The writing prompt tasks were identical to those distributed to students in the practices of face-to-face conferencing. Students were instructed at the beginning of the year on conducting face-to-face conferencing and how to participate in face-to-face peer conferencing. Students demonstrated a scenario on what constructive criticisms are appropriate and what the conferencing experience looks like. The conferencing process instruction was not repeated before the research writing peer conference. I also want to stress that I did not have any involvement in students’ comments; only provided the prompts.

Students’ peer comments illustrated a more sophisticated level of critical thinking rather than the surface level information. Reflecting Nancy Sommers’ research investigating the “Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers,” I examined my students’ peer comments. In her study, Sommer’s examined the revision strategies of experienced writers and student writers, identifying the types of revisions experienced and student writers make, and how those revisions shaped the writer’s awareness in their own revision strategies (43). Similarly, in my approach, I examined the students peer comments and I divided their comments into two categories of content: being more sophisticated examining the text as a whole, and lexical comments, only seeing the surface. According to Sommers, student writers understand the revision process as a “rewording activity…in terms of dictionaries…Lexical changes are the major revision activities of the students because economy is their goal” (47). Analyzing the posted peer comments, eight comments are lexical comments, while twenty-two are content comments, which is a 57% difference between the two types of
comments received in papers. Additionally, among the nineteen students, all claimed in their post survey questionnaire that they received a content comment within their peer conferencing (questionnaire). Content comments and lexical comments reflect different learning levels that can be measured on Benjamin Bloom’s Taxonomy of Cognitive Learning.

The increased level of complexity in students’ writing response is in alignment with Benjamin Bloom’s Taxonomy of Cognitive Learning. Bloom argues that students apply specific behaviors or actions when accomplishing specific steps in their cognitive learning stage (“Bloom’s Revised”). These actions, within each cognitive learning stage, are coded as learning verbs. For instance, students examining the text as a whole are also performing higher-level thinking. Students’ comments demonstrated examples of deconstruction, organizing, critiquing, and judging peers’ writing which is achieving the evaluating and analyzing level of Bloom’s. A student participating in the blog comments to a peer, “Break up your topics into paragraphs so it’s easier to tell when your (sic) changing topic’s (sic). Explain your supports for each topic more.” This student is deconstructing the peer’s writing by identifying what could be improved within the peer’s content and organization. The student is also making the judgment that more explanation is needed in order to improve the understanding of the writing is high level thinking.

Lexical or surface comments require lower level thinking. Students located, identified, and recognized problems in grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation. Through the blog, students are applying higher level thinking while peer conferencing.

The most frequently employed content comments students received were to expand ideas, explain information, and condense information due to redundancy.
Comments were also directed toward specific research writing processes such as “specify the research question,” “make a better connection to the research topic,” “revise the thesis,” and “add internal citations.” Students were examining the text as a whole, scrutinizing their peer’s writing with a critical lens, identifying related ideas and topics that readers want to know and learn more about. Students were transforming themselves from the role of the classmate to a reader, teacher, and audience. The students were shifting their perspectives from classmates being friends to peer readers as objective figures. Students developed an objective view of their peers’ writing, which produced more productive peer commentary. The objective criticism was developed through the elimination of personal contact mediating influence of the technology. Audience awareness was produced by the use of computers and elimination of students recognizing “classmates” as their audience in the post-survey.

The various content comments students received were also audience influenced, such as developing a better attention getter and peers recommending sources and information; students acted as sources themselves. In more traditional approaches to teaching of research writing and peer conferencing, students rely upon the teacher’s help for expanding, revising, and motivating their writing process. The students in this study illustrate a collectively motivated writing community, revising and learning from one another. Sommers states that “students do not have strategies for handling (revising) the whole essay” (48). These students demonstrated that student writers can revise writing as a whole, deconstructing, judging, and organizing content. Student writers can process and evaluate writing in a high level thinking order. Due to the familiarity and comfort in communicating with peers through technology, students were able to show their capacity
for high level thinking. Students today do not have the practice communicating with a pencil and paper; therefore their writing may not express what they can truly exhibit. I think they only need a computer and forum to post and house their discussions and writings.
CHAPTER III

TWO STUDENT CASE STUDIES

I chose my participants because they are two students of different learning levels. I wanted to measure how writing through blogs can be beneficial to all learning levels. Can these two students with different learning levels achieve and build upon their writing skills when utilizing the blog? Will they maintain motivation to learn when writing through the blog? Throughout the first three quarters of the school year Jon and Kara maintained similar composures in the classroom, participating frequently in classroom discussions, socializing with classmates, and volunteering often to perform tasks. However, the intentions behind the students’ participating, socializing and volunteering were different. Jon participated in class discussions because he needed clarification or he had questions on the assignment. Kara participated because she wanted to elaborate or analyze the class discussion to illustrate her knowledge. Jon was distracted easily by other students and also started unnecessary conversations when he did not understand a lesson. Kara’s reason to socializing is because she understood the class discussion. Both students volunteered a lot, demonstrating their eagerness to learn. For instance, Kara read aloud which can be attributed to her high reading level and confidence with reading. Jon struggled to read aloud but volunteered to read a similar number of times as Kara. Jon always volunteered to run errands for me in order to get out of class. Kara volunteered because she was ahead of the assignment schedule. Students demonstrated similarities in
their classroom composes, they are motivated to achieve, but both students exemplify
different practices in reaching higher level achievements. Jon asked questions in class
and participated to read, which assisted him in developing the areas where he knew he
struggled. However, he also socialized with friends and tried to leave class when he knew
his weaknesses, which was often. Kara participated often and volunteered when she was
ahead of the class schedule. She tried to build upon the skills she has already developed.

Jon participates often in class, but turns in little homework; if he does, it is late.
Throughout the year, he has never completed, in its entirety, a project or long-term
assignment. Kara participates often in class and turns in all of her homework ahead of the
due date, reads from her Kindle during class lectures and work periods because her work
is already complete. Both students were participants in the literary response pilot study;
Jon rarely participated, only fulfilling one post. Kara posted more than the required
amount; four times per four week session, eight times per quarter. Jon and Kara, utilizing
the blogs while peer reviewing research writing, showed that they both enjoyed the
process. They compiled different kinds of responses and had different types of useful
comments toward their peers. Most importantly, despite their different writing levels,
they both exhibited motivation and performed well writing on the blog.

Jon

Jon performed particularly well on his research paper due to his motivation and
interest in the blog. He began the blog strong, like he usually does in his assignments.
The first two prompts asked for the students to post their research question and receive
feedback from peers. Then after conducting research and reading peers’ comments,
students were asked whether they had made subsequent changes to their research question (Appendix D). Jon made comments to two very high level achieving students, Ken and Dan. He instructed Ken to focus his research on one or two countries when identifying civil rights movements in countries other than America. Jon instructed Dan to refocus on the topic of civil rights, “your (sic) have a lot of info on him (Jackie Robinson) but not how he helped the black community.”

The next day when students were conferencing their research question, Jon noticed that Ken took his advice, not giving credit to Jon’s comment, but posted that “[H]e realized his topic was too broad and writing about different countries wouldn’t work…change my focus to Ireland.” However, Jon was pleased to see that Ken took his “advice.” Dan did not take Jon’s advice and chose not to change his question. When asked to post in part two of prompt one, if any changes had to be made, Dan responded as if he did not receive any peer criticism, “I didn’t have to change my question.” However, when Dan wrote his paper, he discovered that he was composing a biography of Jackie Robinson, not a civil rights research paper, which was the focus of the assignment and the advice Jon offered from the very beginning. Jon’s advice for both Ken and Dan’s writing was crucial in the drafting process. Ken needed to narrow his topic and Dan needed to expand his topic in order to relate it to the class assignment. Jon consistently provided comments about Ken’s work, because of the motivating and positive effects it left; he provided a solution to a problem he saw and the person used his solution to their problem. Since he knew that Ken would accept his solutions, Jon continued to follow Ken’s drafting process.
For the second prompt, the student had to post their outline to peer conference. Jon commented on Dan’s work again, specific to Dan’s writing goals in order to help his thesis topic and focus:

(don’t) dot (sic) go off topic at all…maybe more info on the rallies and the concerts held to show civil rights. I know that Jackie Robinson had to have participated in some of them and that he held conventions for civil rights so add more of the events that he was in.

Jon began posting comments that asked for Dan to possibly include information that could help his thesis become focused on civil rights. Since Dan did not originally use his suggestion to refocus his research question, Jon appears to be steering Dan in the correct informational path to develop a working thesis. He is doing this by asking questions about the research main ideas. Jon’s questions were successful, which Dan adds to his outline:

Robinson also participated in many marches and picket lines protesting discrimination. For example, he organized a march to integrate schools that walked through Washington D.C…

Jon’s comments eventually had an impact on Dan’s view on his topic and prompted him to revise.

Jon turned in his own paper, complete and on time. When Jon was turning in his paper, I told him I was proud of his hard work and achievement. I asked him why he continued and completed this assignment. He stated that he did not think the blog would be successful; he would not have to complete the assignment because the blog would fail. He did not think that “people would read my
comments or even use them. When Ken used my advice I felt better about what I was putting out there (the blog) for people to use” (interview). Jon became motivated when his peers’ accepted his advice and his confidence improved because he realized his voice was heard and his peers wanted to hear and use his ideas through the blog.

Kara

Kara is extremely comfortable with technology and is a strong writer; hence her approach to the conferencing blog was articulate, comfortable, and passionate. In the first three prompts, Kara was helpful to her peers in various ways: content, grammar and trouble-shooting of the blog:

First off, the bright green text is hurting my eyes. ha ha :] I think you chose an interesting topic to research. On question 4, you are sort of vague on what exactly happened in the segregated areas? Where (sic) colored people ignored or were (sic) they publicly humiliated or beaten by the whites? Looking forward to hearing more about your topic!

Kara addresses, first hand, that the writer needs to change the formatting of her posting because it is not agreeable to the audience. She then comments with open-ended questions, provoking the peer to visit further research. She also notices the mistakes she made in her own grammar and corrects her miscues:

P.S.- in the sentence ‘Where colored people ignored or were they publicly humiliated or beaten by the whites?’ I meant to put WERE at the beginning, not WHERE.
She corrected her spelling mistakes of “WERE” and “WHERE” while instructing another peer on fixing her own mistakes. Most adults do not do that, which shows her modesty and maturity when approaching problems and solutions. She is not afraid to bring a solution to the table and if she is incorrect but discovers another solution, she fixes it. In most of her peer comments, she approached the situation in this manner. She would state the problem and offer a solution or various solutions:

I think that if you’re having trouble finding reliable resources, then you should modify your question. You don’t have to change your topic altogether but maybe change what your question is asking about Malcolm X?

Her solutions to the peer’s problem of “finding reliable sources” and the solution to “modify your question,” never gave her peer an exact answer only. Rather, her questions led him toward the right direction to “maybe change what your question is asking about Malcom X” (emphasis added). Kara provides what Straub calls “facilitative” rather than “directive” comments, forming a “social action” between students (98). These facilitative comments “point specifically to issues in the (student’s) writing…offered explanations” and exhibited the tone of an “encouraging teacher or guide rather than the marks of a critic” (107).

As their writing process began to evolve and the conferencing prompts became more elaborate, such as their first draft conference, Kara’s comments also began to take on a complex form and take on a role as teacher. She was not only asking peers to draw upon more research in order to define, expand topics, and connect ideas, she was now instructing them how to perform and why. In addition, peers on the blog were seeking her
out, through the blog for advice and assistance with their writing, and later in the classroom following up checking her peers’ progress. In one instance, conferencing first drafts, Brooke commented to Holly’s draft:

> I think your topic is good. You just need some more information. You repeat a lot of the same info. Besides that. (sic) Good job.

Holly replies:

> Yeah I thought that too but that information was on all of the websites and there was not much more information

This exchange between Brooke and Holly illustrates that students know they need to perform a revision, such as eliminating redundancy and adding new information; however, they do not know how to approach it. Holly knew she was repeating information, but she could not find anything else in her research; she was stuck. Kara commented:

> I think you should reword your first paragraph, you were repeating words a lot which made the idea of your paper kind of fuzzy. PS- you may want to take out the little part that says ‘thesis statement’ where your thesis statement is. You need to also have more supports on the bus boycott. It doesn’t really talk about the effects it had on the civil rights movements and Rosa’s impact…In your 5th paragraph I only have one question: HOW? And, people don’t want to accomplish segregation, they want to abolish it…

Kara provides constructive criticism, offering open-ended questions for Holly to answer that will lead her to further research. She indirectly instructs her on how to expand her
paper, identifies questions Holly might ask herself in order to find additional sources, and helps the thesis structure of the paper that the previous peer disregarded. In the classroom during instruction and gathering research, Holly would ask Kara for help because of the assistance she was provided through the blog. Holly stated, “she (Kara) was helping me through the blog; she knows what I am doing, so she can help me (in class).” Students began forming roles, trusts, and connections throughout the blog and those relationships were reflected positively into the classroom, fostering student collaboration. The self-selected pairs seen in face-to-face conferencing was eliminated in the blog conferencing. Kara commented on various people. There was not a consistent pattern in the people she made comments with, such as her friends, classmates, boys, girls, low level or high level students. Each student she commented on used her advice in their revisions. Kara did so well on the blog, her peers sought out for her advice.

Jon and Kara’s success for themselves as writers, readers, and motivators for others reveals that the online discussion boards can be a useful instructional tool for the classroom instruction of research writing. Jon and Kara both developed as writers and their critical perspective of writing improved because of their peer comments. Jon exhibited an improvement in his writing. He has never successfully completed an extensive writing assignment on time and he successfully completed this study’s research paper on time and with effort. In addition, in his interview he stated that he was more motivated because of his peers’ comments and he saw that his peers listened and accepted his advice. The motivation from his peers could be the reason why he completed his assignment. He felt he was not working on his paper alone; rather it was a collaborative effort. Jon had support from his peers through every step of the writing process. Kara
entered the study as a proficient writer, however in working with her peers through the blog she developed as a writer. Kara developed knowing how to identify the structure of a research paper. Kara learned different ways to organize, analyze, and describe her peers’ writings and how to articulate those thoughts to her peers. Jon and Kara were able to problem solve and think critically about how to improve their peers’ writing. They also learned how to develop possible solutions and revision comments while constricted by each peer’s different writing styles and unfamiliar research topics. The blog conferencing illustrated that the students improved others’ writing while also fostering audience awareness and critical reviews. The blog provided achievement in writing for all learning levels in the classroom.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The data from the quantitative and qualitative analyses suggest several implications for the role of blogs as pedagogical tools for teaching writing. Blogs can both foster and facilitate the teaching of research writing. The pre- and post-surveys demonstrated that the discussion forums fostered audience awareness and revision, and that they also taught how to conduct research. In the post-survey, students provided a more elaborate and detailed definition of the steps and manner in which the research was conducted. Unlike the generalized statements in the pre-surveys that simply classify research as “getting your resources and getting information to use, make an outline and then start the report,” students provided a more detailed description in the post-surveys explaining the steps and process of research:

1. You find a topic
2. You search (sic) it online
3. You write down ideas/info
4. You start drafting
5. Make revisions
6. Type final drafts (questionnaire)

Through learning the research writing processes, students demonstrated their understanding and indicated preferences toward using the blog, especially as a
conferencing tool. Since my research began as a pilot study in a school setting, the
students were on a securely administered blog, only open to invitation. There have been
studies, Geoffery Middlebrook’s to identify one, that allow students to post to public
forums and the public dialogues with the students about their writing. The students in
Middlebrook’s study had even further audience awareness due to the unknown audiences
on the internet.

In my study, students indicated through their on-line discussions and pre-and
post- survey questionnaires that they became more aware of their audiences. More
importantly, students redefined their research audience. Rather than identifying their
audience as a broad spectrum of people in society including parents, bosses, and
classmates, the students narrowed their focus to the boundaries of the blog and to the
research they were conducting. Accordingly, my data suggests that blogs are a useful tool
in encouraging and motivating students to look at writing from a “whole” perspective and
should be implemented in the classroom’s writing process. My study has also indicated
the effectiveness of blogs, motivational and cooperative behaviors of blogs, and
improved academic achievement.

Comparing face-to-face conferencing with blog conferencing in order to measure
the productivity and beneficial work habits in student learning would be valuable for
classroom instruction. The data from this study suggests that the blog participants wrote
more in their written peer comments than the face-to-face conference students. The non-
blog students answered the same peer conferencing prompts as the blog participants.
Students on the blog had more detail in their responses, resulting in a constant dialogue
and maintaining problem-solving rhetorical solutions within the writing piece. Students
would almost immediately correct and repost their revisions after reading their peer’s comments, encouraging students to solicit further comments from peers on their work, thus resulting in more drafts than the face-to-face conferencing. Unlike the face-to-face conferencing student, who would pair with one other student and receive comments from only one other perspective, the blog conferencing student is on a discussion board allowing the eighteen other bloggers on the forum to read, dialogue, and provide comments. The blog is encouraging more dialogue and writing between wider audiences than face-to-face conferencing. The results suggest that students produced significantly more work, but they felt there was less produced due to their familiarity with the technology and comfort created by the detachment of their peers. Can implementing blogs in classrooms develop students discourse better than face-to-face conferencing? Would the blog students conduct more academic discourse while producing quality work utilizing technology? The blog can be a community of discoursed learning that can be accessed at school and home.

Furthermore, if students within my study maintained anonymity, having pseudonyms instead of their names on the posts, would their posts and comments change even more? Would they develop more confidence and motivation, similar to Jon, resulting in commenting on more peers rather than staying in the comfort of the familiar? Encouraging students to publish onto specific webpages, such as political, entertainment, or community blogs, would this change their knowledge of audience from the varying webpage or would they maintain a consistent audience? Which makes me question, would maintaining an anonymous screen-name associate with critical feedback? Would the rhetorical complexity of students’ comments change?
Since students in this study preferred the blog, showed an understanding of the research process, can online education improve student achievement due to the increased motivation fostered among the blog students? Specifically focusing on the two students who left the research study early due to school suspension, one student continued revising and collaborating through the blog, while the other student discontinued her involvement. The student who continued his blog collaboration turned in his work on time and maintained his GPA; whereas the other student did not turn in her paper and thereby dropped significantly in GPA. Subsequently presenting the question, how much can technology sustain and improve student achievement?

Researchers have examined the need for positive school climates, and the need for the reduction of school discipline in order to concentrate on student learning and assist discipline student’s emotional needs. Is there a greater chance of academic recovery for suspension students that are connected to the classroom through technology? Maintaining grades, communication and motivation to learn can help decrease the amount of discipline students, which is the goal of all education systems.

This study started in a middle school classroom for the pedagogical purpose of developing my students’ discourse about their writing. I have always observed face-to-face conferencing as more a social action than academic. I have been brainstorming various methods to make the process more productive to their writing and revision processes. The previous year students wrote in my end of the year evaluation that I should incorporate more technology in my instruction and student learning. Consequently, I began researching various technology tools and how I could implement them in my lessons. Talking to a colleague about blogs and how they are a useful tool for
literary discussions I built my pilot study blog, Literature Log Blog, for the first three quarters of the school year. The pilot study was surprisingly successful and I decided to transition to blog from literary to composition.

Learning and adapting a new method, naturally contains concerns and hesitation. I was concerned if the blog would successfully transition in my classroom, but after becoming familiar with the program the benefits surpassed the glitches. As I have experienced, colleagues that are not comfortable with technology may need some encouragement when implementing technology in their pedagogy. Similar to my experience, once it is practiced and a routine is formed the process is easy and manageable. For instance, when implementing the Literary Log Blog and the Research Writing Blog I made a schedule for prompts and students knew when to post and the grading criteria. I would check the blog at the same time every night, so I didn’t get overwhelmed with work. For the Literature Log Blog, I would stay organized with a rubric grade sheet and only post comments to random students because I wanted the dialogue to evolve from the students, not the teacher. My comments let them know I was reading their work.

Students want to use technology to create and publish their thoughts, ideas, and discoveries to their peers. Blogs allow students to have a voice to be heard and want that to be available in their classroom instruction. Teachers are being asked to take the position as students in order to learn the tools that students want to make them academically successful. As teachers, we need to educate ourselves in order to educate our students.
APPENDIX A

Pre-survey Questionnaire
What I Know: About Research

1). What is research?

2). Why do we do research? In other words, what is the point?

3). What are the steps or how do we conduct research?

4). Who is the audience for research? In other words, who is the research for?
APPENDIX B

Post-survey Questionnaire
*Answer each question honestly. Be specific in your explanations.

1). Which method did you prefer to conduct peer revision: the blog or peer conferencing? Why was this method of revision preferred?

2). What comments/suggestions did you receive through: the Blog or peer conferencing (example: grammar, spelling, MLA formatting) (circle one)
    Explain your choices:

3). What are the steps or how do we conduct research?

4). Who is the audience for research? In other words, who is the research for?
APPENDIX C

Forum Instructions
1). Students that want to participate in the on-line discussion need to fill-out, with parent signature, the e-mail address they will use to fill out the registration. (Note: emails will not be shown on the feed, only I need them to request and administer students for the closed discussion board.)

2). Student will receive an e-mail from “Miss. McGuinness” requesting to join an online discussion group titled “McGuinness’ Literary Discussion.” It will ask to contribute to the blog click on the link provided: http://www.blogger.com........

3). Enable and click on the link.

4). You will be prompted a screen welcoming you to McGuinness’ Literary Discussion, http://mcglit.blogspot.com (As seen below)
5). You DO NOT have to make a Google Account. It is a blog account using your **SAME** e-mail address you provided me in the signed form. You are not making a new e-mail address or password.

6). Click on ‘Create Your Account Now.’ (As seen below)

![Create Your Account Now](image)

7). I need you to fill out- (as seen below)
   a). The e-mail address you provided me
   b). Repeat e-mail input
   c). Enter a password (I recommend you tell your parents or write it down next to your computer, I do not have access to passwords!)
   d). Retype Password
   e). Enter your display name: First Name and Last Name
   f). DO NOT click e-mail notifications!
   g). Type birthdate
   h). Enter word verifications for security
   i). Read Terms of Service, check the box.

8). Once everything in #7 is completed correctly, click the ‘Continue’ arrow.
9). You will be prompted to enter a verification code to either a text or voice message on your cell or land phone line. Scroll to find United States, enter your 9 digit telephone number with area code.

10). In one to two seconds you should receive a text with a 6 digit number (mine was 6). Enter that in the verification box, hit the orange enter or confirm prompt.

11). You are then transferred to the blog page! Now, close the window and go to your web e-mail page. (Yahoo, AOL, Gmail, etc.)

12). You will have an e-mail sent to the web address account you receive your e-mails titled “Account Verification” Open the email and click the link to activate the blog. This ensures you are the owner of the email address.

12). After verification of your email and activating the blog, first task I want you to do is log into the blog account: http://www.blogger.com.
Input your e-mail address and password, this will forward you to “McGuinness’ Literary Discussion.” Once here, click ‘View Blog’ scroll down and read the blog I posted requesting an action from you. Provide a comment or answer. I want to know if you registered without any problems.

13). After providing your first post, look around the blog forum. Play with the options. Get familiar with site. We are going to be teaching one another!

*Note: After looking around the blog discussion board, if you decide this is not ideal for you, you may go to the ‘Settings’ tab, ‘Permissions,’ and then leave the blog discussion at any time.

My e-mail: _____________________________  My password: _____________________________
# APPENDIX D

Research Paper: Prompt #1 (March 22\textsuperscript{nd})

Please continue to respond in an academic writing context (complete sentences and correct grammar/language). In the title line write the Prompt # and your first and last name: such as, Prompt #1- Andrea McGuinness.

If you respond to other classmates’ prompts, put it in the response area.

Prompt #1: Please answer the following questions-

1. What event, topic or person did you choose to research?
2. When did this event or person exist?
3. Where did this event or person fight for civil rights?
4. Who, whom or what did this event or person effect?
5. Briefly describe the even or person. What or who is the event or person. What was the outcome of the event or person?
6. What question do you have on your topic that you want to research? (State your research question)
7. What questions do you think your audiences have towards your topic?

*When you are complete and post 1-7 questions: Look at your classmates’ posts, what questions and interest do you have toward their topic? Are you questions similar to their research question? Comment on their questions with your thoughts and reactions: Are they too broad? Predictable? Could they be more specific?

Prompt #1- part 2 (March 23)

You have started to gather your sources. What did you find about your topic? Did your findings change your research question in any way? Such as, are you finding it difficult to answer your question? Is your question too broad that you are finding too much information? Explain.
Prompt #2

Please post (copy and pasting from Word would be the easiest option) your Thesis and outline. View and comment on your peers’ outlines.

1). Is the writer’s Thesis Statement specific and clear?
2). How do the writer’s topics support the Thesis Statement? Are each of the topics specific to the thesis or too broad? In other words, could the writer write a paper on the topic?
3). How does the writer support each topic? Are there three supports for each topic? How do the supports help the writer’s thesis? Are the supports specific? or Are the supports so broad they can be topics within themselves?
Prompt #3- Post your first draft and peer response
Thursday, April 14th post your first draft and you need to read a peer’s draft.
Please look for:
1). What is their thesis statement? Is it too broad? Too specific?
2). What are their body paragraph topics? Do the body paragraphs’ topics support the thesis statement?
3). Are there more ideas of the writer or quotes/paraphrasing? For instance, are there more internal citations than the writer’s ideas?
4). Does the writer explain quotes, add leads to the quotes or drop quotes into the text? Mark the sections where the writer needs to add leads to quotes.
5). Mark the areas where the writer needs to explain quotes?
6). Mark the areas where there needs to be more explanation? Why do you find these areas unclear?
7). Identify incorrect internal citations? Did they even use internal citations? Do they align with their works cite page?
8). Overall comments- What did you learn about their topic and the civil rights period? What do you feel the writer could explain more? Clarify on? What do you think the writer did well?
Prompt #4- 2nd Draft- Self Grade
Your task: With your rubric, evaluate your second draft. When you complete your grading calculate your grade. What is your “grade”? Do you deserve this grade? Explain your reason?
After checking the areas you have addressed on the rubric:
What do you need to expand? Improve? Remove? Add to your research paper?
Do you have difficulty with any of the areas you need revised in your writing? If so, state that area and your questions.
WORKS CITED


Lee, Jong-Wha. “Education for Technology Readiness: Prospects for Developing


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