ENGAGING AND INTERACTIVE PRACTICES FOR ONLINE WRITERS: FOSTERING WRITING DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-EFFICACY

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Each semester, students express a lack of confidence about their writing skills and doubts about their abilities to improve over the course of fifteen weeks. In response, writing instructors strive to establish an environment conducive to improving students' writing skills and self-efficacy. In a face-to-face course, instructors can implement affective learning strategies in close proximity, and as a result, the dynamic between teacher and student fosters a positive learning environment with opportunities to discuss drafts, conduct peer reviews, assist in revision decisions, and promote reflective practices. Employing these same strategies in an online course would appear to be difficult, if not impossible, to enact. As universities increase online course offerings, including both first-year and advanced writing, constructing effective online writing classes that offer rich opportunities for students to grow as confident writers can be particularly challenging. Consequently, investigating and implementing practices that support the growth of self-efficacy, a factor that contributes to achievement (Pajares 144), prove paramount for online writing instructors.

Longitudinal research confirms that students need to develop positive associations with college through successful and reaffirming experiences (Kuh et al. 557; Tinto and Goodsell 14; Upcraft and Gardner). Thus, while instructors should employ strategies that strengthen student writers' skill development, they should also incorporate strategies that increase students' confidence levels as

writers. In particular, online instructors should strive to develop deeper relationships with students and implement practices that appeal to the four "sources of information—enactive, vicarious, exhortative, and emotive" (Bandura 195); simply "[increasing] faculty-to-student interaction" (Barefoot 14) can impact these four contributing factors. In face-to-face classes, instructors have employed affective learning, writing as process, and expressive pedagogy principles to provide the "personal, behavioral, and environmental influences" (qtd. in Schunk and Pajares 35) necessary to promote positive changes in writing behaviors. By using these same strategies in online spaces, instructors can create interactive opportunities that result in transformative learning experiences aimed at improving writing skills and self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy Theory

Albert Bandura's self-efficacy theory is "based on the principal assumption that psychological procedures . . . serve as means of creating and strengthening expectations of personal efficacy" (193). Over time, instructors have found his theory to be a useful framework because it works concurrently with social constructivist and writing process methodologies to nurture substantive development in students' writing and their beliefs about writing (McCarthy et al. 465; Pajares 153; Shell et al. 97). Since efficacy is one's perception that he or she can perform specific actions well, Bandura's theory asserts the idea that this perception can be manipulated by "psychological procedures," including treatments or interventions to students' "performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological states" (195). Self-efficacy results from students' evaluations of such information, often in combination with the context in which they receive it. For example, if a student observes the positive negotiation of an adverse or challenging situation, he or she will process this, and in turn rise above the fear of failure to attempt seemingly difficult actions. Since greater self-efficacy in writing contributes to writing behaviors that rely more consistently upon engagement, persistence, and diligence (Pajares 140), Peter Shea and Temi Bidjerano suggest that positive efforts and strong practices of immediacy in online environments are "crucial to the

development of a theoretical framework for online education," where, in the absence of a conventional classroom structure, "learner agency" may be even more important.

Current Perceptions about Teaching Writing Online

The number of students engaging in online learning continues to increase. Data show that "from fall 2016 to fall 2017 [...] the number of all students who took at least some of their courses online grew by more than 350,000, a healthy 5.7 percent" (Lederman). However, poor student learning outcomes and a lack of student satisfaction still undermine the validity and rigor of the platform in the minds of some educators. Several scholars note that alternative learning environments, particularly online courses, create stress and apprehension for a variety of reasons (Kim and Frick 3). Other researchers attribute student struggles to the nature of the online platform since performance in an online course "requires learners to be confident performing internet-related actions and be willing to self-manage their learning process" (qtd. in Kuo et al. 34). Still others, however, pinpoint the lack of interaction with their instructors as the primary impediment to motivation and performance.

Multiple studies of online learning environments emphasize the student-teacher interaction as an essential aspect of positive course outcomes (Baran et al. 422; Gikandi et al. 2347; Kuo et al. 45; Simpson). In general, a strong student-teacher relationship is central to most learning environments, especially those that are pedagogically framed by social constructivism; consequently, the online platform with its lack of proximity and immediacy, particularly nonverbal immediacy (Baker 5-6), can jeopardize effective student-teacher relationships. In addition, the asynchronous exchanges of information by students and teachers prohibit the "two-way reciprocal communication" (Kuo et al. 36) that facilitates relationship-building. Finally, online learning can fail to simulate the personal connection that many students find indispensable in a face-to-face classroom, thus creating a significant pitfall considering that teacher presence

correlates both with students' incentive to learn (Baker 21) and self-efficacy (Shea and Bidjerano 1727).

Students attempting to meet expectations in online courses may encounter layers of issues that impede performance. Navigating online spaces can be a very stressful act (e.g., being present, interacting with classmates, completing assignments, and attempting revision and reflection). It can also be an isolating environment. Students do not have the physical interaction and support of their classmates and instructor. Instead, they rely in large part on their confidence in their abilities and their regulation of their activities (Nemati and Thompson 84). Further, Hamid Nemati and Marcia Thompson's research determined that students must rely on personal characteristics in the online environment to persevere. If students feel as though the instructor exists as a distant entity who simply dictates content and procedures, quite possibly, their self-efficacy will remain static. However, by signifying the relationship between teacher and student as central to efficacious academic growth, this relationship, based upon its mutuality, can also promote the positive emotions necessary for the growth of self-efficacy. In application, Bandura's theory of self-efficacy encourages targeted intervention, and fittingly, teachers can influence the development of students' positive self-beliefs (Pianta et al. 370). The question, however, is what do such interventions look like in an online writing course? Creating an affective learning environment is one step in the right direction.

Affective Learning: Building Online Student-Teacher Relationships

When it comes to writing, several issues can impede the confidence necessary for student success at the college level. Students may feel ill-prepared or ill-equipped to succeed in online writing courses; many sincerely doubt their ability to improve. Regardless of the causes of students' low levels of self-efficacy, reversing this lack of confidence is critical in writing courses because there is "a generalized interrelation between beliefs and performance for . . . writing" (Shell et al. 97).

Online instructors can use the affective learning model to mitigate students' uncertainty and contribute to the positive growth of their writing self-efficacy.

Affective learning "relates to students' interests, attitudes, and motivations" (Gano-Phillips 1), and Credence Baker's study of 699 college students concurs that increasing an affective component of learning, such as building comfortable relationships, motivates students intrinsically to engage in learning. Earl's foundation of "Intrusive Advising" methods applied to the online classroom works nicely to outline goals for interaction (Varney par. 3):

- Incorporate deliberate intervention to enhance student motivation
- Use strategies to show interest and involvement with students
- Implement intensive advising designed to increase the probability of student success
- Aim to educate students on all options
- Approach students before situations develop

Instructors can shape these goals for use in the online platform, according to the NCTE, by leveraging the "inherent benefits of the electronic environment" via the use of private messages, blogs, audio recorded feedback or forums. Anticipation of a new situation, such as an online course, can produce negative states, such as stress and anxiety, that can fester and result in loss of control and diminished self-efficacy beliefs (Shea and Bidjerano 1725). Therefore, establishing a strong rapport with individual online students via email or video before classes start, or in the first week, can alleviate their sense of apprehension or intimidation about the platform. Figure 1 exemplifies a welcome letter for online students. Sent as a video/audio clip or an email prior to the start of the semester, such messages can initiate student-instructor communication, motivate students to prepare for the course, reveal something about the instructor, and encourage students to manage their efforts, thus reducing stress.

To address issues compounded by asynchronous communication or lack of two-way communication that might impede the instructor-student relationship or damage self-efficacy, instructors may choose to support students via Skype meetings, Google Meet, synchronous online dialogues/forums (as supported by educational platform software), or regular chats via services like Remind.com. If we are to believe Shea and Bidjerano (1724) who suggest that student self-efficacy is a powerful construct in understanding student learning and academic achievement, we can then also surmise that those students who respond to the enhanced immediacy practices in online learning will accomplish far greater levels of success in their composition classes. The model of affective learning shows a foundation built on social presence and teaching presence (Shea and Bidjerano 1722), and both foster and feed a student's sense of writing self-efficacy. When implemented, instructors will find before them motivated students with well-developed affective learning skills.

Writing as Process: Improving Online Feedback

Writing process theory has shaped writing pedagogy for over fifty years, and its most significant contribution has been its recursive set of strategies (i.e., inventing, drafting, revising, polishing) aimed at making writing purposeful (Flower and Hayes 372). In addition, by moving feedback from a summative to formative position, opportunities for growth in students' skills and confidence have increased. Writing as process entails three main phases: invention, composition, and revision. According to Jason Gulya, using the writing process strategy encourages students in two ways: they come to understand "writing as inextricable from thought" and start to take intellectual risks as they become more comfortable "with letting writing push them in new directions rather than aiming to sit down with exact ideas of what they are going to write" (566). Incorporating assignments that revolve around writing as process can be time-consuming for online instructors since success depends on both feedback and revision; however, responding to the current content of their work and the direction it must take for improvement is of great value to students. They want high quality

Amy,

Welcome to Advanced Critical Writing!

Some consider critical thinking a lost art because of technology. This semester offers you the chance to brush up on the important elements of argument, so you can gain confidence in constructing your own arguments.

By discussing key aspects of arguments, you will discover why focusing on the logical construction of an argument helps writers avoid falling into the trap of building and responding to an argument with a raw, emotional appeal. Learning these techniques now will serve you well both personally and professionally.

I recorded a video (Week 1: Course Intro) that provides an overview of the syllabus, expectations, forums, grading, and assignments; you can find this required viewing assignment in Week 1 on Moodle. This presentation should answer many of the questions you may have about how to navigate the course. Also, by week's end, please email me the following:

- Three topics you are interested in covering this semester
- Why they interest you
- Aspects of writing you hope to improve

Look for more details next week about specific course information. Feel free to email me with any questions you may have at this point. I look forward to a productive and engaging semester!

Figure 1: Welcome Letter for Online Student

feedback that is interactive and timely, but accomplishing that in an online class is often difficult.

Jerome Delaney et al. recommend creating a congenial atmosphere where students can seek help, offer alternative explanations, and get feedback on their ideas. Developing and integrating formalized writer's conferences that focus on student perceptions about paper topics or research is ideal. Instructors can conduct conferences in a face-to-face setting if the student is local, or via Skype/Google Meet if the student is taking the course from another location. Since these conferences concentrate on the initial stages of writing and research, instructors may ask students to outline what is working and what is not working in their writing thus far in the semester. Each conference can consist of a mini-lesson resulting in an action

plan. However, the goal is to build the confidence of the student writer when these choices are accompanied by hesitation. By indicating that their chosen topic will yield profitable research, even if it needs a bit of shaping to meet the assigned research goals, students are able to move forward from these conferences with confidence about their research methods. This type of pre-research preparation is mere confidence building. Zimmerman agrees that students who are confident in their academic abilities usually prepare themselves more effectively than students with lower levels of confidence (qtd. in Larseingue 431). He writes that "self-perceptions of [one's] ability contribute to a calm and thoughtful approach to task completion and problem solving (Zimmerman, 1989) and the use of analytic strategies for improving performance" (Bandura & Jourden, 1991; Bandura & Wood, 1989; Wood & Bandura, Bailey, 1990) (qtd. in Larseingue 431). An increase in immediacy practices via conferencing can therefore contribute to an increase in students' writing self-efficacy and its associated behavioral byproducts, such as the ability to tolerate course workload demands (Larseingue 432).

Instructors can achieve additional components that work to build self-efficacy through modeling. Beth L. Hewett notes that the intimacy of these conferences provides reassurance to the student that he or she is a valuable individual. These moments give instructors a chance to model tone, tact, social constructs, audience, and other strategies so students can learn to stay focused on their writing (Hewett 11). For example, a screencast that explores the student's consideration of purpose and audience can clarify how to further develop these elements. Instructors can also model for students verbal techniques, timing, nonverbal expressions and gestures, and cueing, which Brophy says "project[s] a level of intensity that tells students that material is especially important and deserves close attention" (77). Furthermore, Steven A. Meyers' work concedes that an instructor's purposeful demonstration of care can increase students' motivation and engagement and ultimately can advance their education (208). Building layers of understanding for students connects them to the material and reinforces both their self-efficacy and the likelihood they will surpass the minimum expectations of the assignments.

Self-efficacy can be fostered in a specific domain, as mentioned above, as well as through vicarious experiences; for example, students can learn from the experience of others. Thus, students create "social comparison and interpretation of the experiences of others who have been successful or unsuccessful in performing similar tasks (Bandura, 1997)" (qtd. in Shea and Bidjerano 1724). Peers play a role in establishing each other's self-efficacy in the online composition classroom, as shown in Figure 2.

Student 1: It looks like we've been able to put together some good sources. What do you guys think due to our time constraint now breaking it up and each of us putting together some evidence for one of our reasons and we can put it all together? I'd be willing to do the taxes or business advantages unless someone had another idea for putting our ideas together.

Student 3: Thanks … for putting together our information and organizing it in this post! I think these reasons are perfect and really help our argument become strong. Here's a link I found from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. They assessed more than 10,000 scientific studies on the medical benefits and adverse effects of marijuana. The review found that marijuana, or products containing cannabinoids, which are the active ingredients in marijuana, are effective at relieving chronic pain.

Student 2: I think that's [sic] a good idea! I can go through our sources and write a paragraph or two about the different health benefits that come with legalizing marijuana.

Student 3: Good idea! I could focus on the lowering jail/prison populations.

Student 1: Thank you everyone for gathering some helpful articles/evidence! Student 2 said she would focus on the health benefits, I could focus on the jail populations. Student 4 said she could focus on either the business or tax advantages so, Student 5, if you wouldn't mind focusing on one of those topics? Perhaps Student 4 could do the business opportunities as she brought up earlier and Student 5 could focus on the tax advantage? I was thinking we could post our paragraphs here and then one of us can bring them all together in the end for the official post.

Student 2: That sounds good! I added another discussion topic a little bit ago including my part about the health benefits, and if anyone needs ideas or is having troubles with their part I would be glad to help! Just let me know.

Figure 2: Collaborative Work for an Online Group Project

When absent from the classroom environment, students must grapple with whatever limited contact they have with peers. Therefore, creating collaborative assignments may offer students opportunities to measure how well they can accomplish the course objectives. Instructors can suggest discussion group forums, Google Hangout,

or peer editing spaces that enable classmates to leave written, audio, or video comments for their peers. In the online setting, students work to construct their own academic and social experiences, and Shea and Bidjerano (1724) establish that self-efficacy beliefs are open to change through social comparison.

Finally, being comfortable in one's writing skills enables confidence in critical thinking and revision. An IRB-approved study at Oakland University provided data on one online first-year writing class which show that 66% percent of the 22 students found themselves "very comfortable" when it came to making revisions of their work based on individual conference outcomes. Students in this first-year composition class reflected on the comfort level they experienced. Figure 3 presents Alex K.'s reported experience.

> "I had a solid research plan for my paper … I became very comfortable with revisions … In our conference, [my instructor] amended some of my work and it helped me a lot … Professor _____ answered [my] questions. I'd give my comfortability a 5 [the highest possible number] because I understood the comments and internalized the feedback."

Figure 3: Student Comment on Revisions of Online Assignment

In another first-year writing class, required revision plans (see Figure 4) provide the impetus students need to consider an approach for revising carefully, and discussing students' revision goals, via online conferencing or screencasts, allows instructors and students to develop an interpersonal relationship that has the potential to "promote positive development" (Pianta et al. 368). With the revision plans, students anticipate and negotiate instructor feedback, which leads to calculated revision strategies aimed at the improvement of their texts. The revision plans serve another purpose as well; they are intended to connect students to their writing but also to their instructors because they give students a "conceptual vocabulary to 'talk' about their] writing" (Berzsenyi 72). When writers engage in the revision stage, they often find the end product to be more successful in regards to accomplishing its goals. Therefore, while using instructor feedback to revise seems to be a process students must navigate alone,

especially in online courses, it must be dialogic; instructor feedback becomes fundamentally more valuable to students who are encouraged to consider which aspects of their essays will benefit most from careful and critical revision. In using these variations on guided practice, instructors and peers can enhance students' self-efficacy, and students can develop strategies that improve their writing.

Revision Plan In the space below, write the issues that you have **selected** to focus on for your revisions. Make sure that you prioritize these issues. Next, indicate a specific plan for addressing this issue in the revision process. These issues should not be related to grammar or citation errors, as such issues can be addressed in the proofreading process. Remember, you might use this space to defend a particular strategy you intend to proceed with despite instructor feedback indicating otherwise. Finally, explain the rhetorical benefit of each revision step. How will the change further develop, for example, your ethos or your essay's purpose?			
Priority	Selected Issue/ Concern/Problem	My Plan	Rhetorical Benefit
1	Not discussing the opposing side to my argument.	I plan to write a brief argument for the opposing side, and see where I can fit that into my paper.	Logos: It will allow the reader to see the evident logic within my paper.
2	I am concerned that I did not use enough quotes within my paper.	I plan to reread my essay and count how many quotes I used. If a paragraph does not have a quote I may add one to give more emphasis.	Logos/Pathos: If the quote is a personal quote then it would relate to pathos, but if I add another factual quote then it would relate to logos.
3	I used a real life example in this essay of a player who died, and whose brain was very damaged, maybe that was not a good idea?	I plan to reread the paragraph where I tried including a real life example regarding my topic. If it seems to drag the paper on, I will take it out of my essay.	Ethos/Logos: Keeping the example gives me credibility. Taking it out may shine more light on the logic of my essay.
4	I did not discuss my findings with my Google survey about football injuries, and I am debating if I should	I think that my essay flows very well as it is right now, if I reread it and something is missing, my plan is to add in my findings with my survey.	Ethos: Creating my own survey and discussing the findings would give me as a writer a lot of credibility in the readers' perspective.
5	Is my viewpoint on the topic stated clearly, and correctly in the right parts of the paper?	My plan is to have a family member read my essay and I will ask them what they think of my viewpoint, and if they thought it was properly explained in the essay.	Pathos: My viewpoint is trying to shift the readers' emotions, so that they may side with me on this controversial topic.

Figure 4: Student-devised Revision Plan (form adapted from "Effective Assignment Sequencing")

Expressive Pedagogy: Using Reflection to Enhance Online Learning

Dating back to the 1960s, expressive writing emerged as a means for a writer to investigate the role as writer, aspects of voice, and connections to a reader. Much like writing process theory, expressivism developed as a reaction to the formal product model that preceded it. Important composition scholars, such as Peter Elbow and Donald Murray, advocated practices that released student writers from the restraints of accuracy in an attempt to restore their confidence by simply alleviating the stress and anxiety that impede writing self-efficacy (Grabe and Kaplan). Thus, for years, writing instructors have incorporated assignments that allow students to explore a sense of themselves and their voices.

Wendy Bishop states, "Expressivist pedagogy employs free writing, journal keeping, reflective writing, and small-group dialogic collaborative response to foster a writer's aesthetic, cognitive and moral development" (19). The writer takes center stage in regards to audience, message, and language choices as he or she controls the message accordingly. In this way, instructors motivate students to become more self-aware and to examine their voices and how they resonate. Imagination also plays a major role in this strategy according to Ann E. Berthoff, who notes that making sense of things embodies writing as process and imagination helps students visualize and assign words to represent meaning (28). What writers imagine and the words they choose to describe such images are all writer-driven (Berthoff 28). The practice of writing expressively fosters ways for students to construct knowledge; however, students also "improve self-belief," which, when coupled with "competency," nets success in the classroom (Tutticci et al. 133). According to Christopher Burnham, assignments that entail reflection prove essential in the classroom because they encourage students to grow "intellectually, cognitively, and ethically" (21).

Across the educational spectrum, educators and practitioners have discovered that using the metacognitive process of reflection, which in the Latin origin means "to turn back" or "to bend," creates a space for students to explore and show personal and academic growth

("Reflection"). Reflection places a pivotal role in Jack Mezirow's transformative learning theory; it stimulates learning, as Mezirow indicates, especially if "learning is defined as the social process of constructing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience as a guide to action" (223). Mezirow believes transformational learning occurs through the reflective process because it offers writers the chance to self-examine their assumptions, interactions, and "operating premises of action" (223). Writing instructors, however, struggle with how to incorporate reflection into the online classroom since many students enter the space with a lack of experience and low self-efficacy in regards to their reflection capabilities.

As previously noted, instructors can apply purposeful interventions to improve students' self-efficacy regarding writing skills (Bandura 211). However, if instructors want to employ reflection as a tool to improve writing self-efficacy, they must construct assignments designed to make these outcomes possible. Research shows that even though students say they prefer unguided reflection, instructor-created boundaries nudge students toward the production of better content. In addition, students benefit from a detailed grading rubric and opportunities for revision. Several of the suggestions below serve as elements instructors can blend or personalize to fit both the course and student needs.

Reflection Models

Choosing or blending reflection models offers students the opportunity to integrate theories and practices or experiences to change and expand their perspectives. Because high school instructors sometimes employ passive learning and construct assignments with free reflection in isolated contexts, students may enter a college classroom with the ability to notice things pragmatically and ethically but with few skills and self-efficacy to navigate Mezirow's process of transformational learning; this becomes even more difficult in a virtual classroom.

Consequently, Jonathan Rix and A. Paige-Smith suggest that instructors should incorporate pathways to overcome "restricted reflection" (31), especially in online writing classes.

To overcome limited reflections, instructors can employ several strategies to foster self-efficacy through writing critical reflections.

John Sandars indicates that "the potential of reflection for individuals may not be fully realised without the help and support of another person" (688); therefore, even though some instructors prefer loose boundaries for reflection, they should carefully construct guided reflection assignments as well to fuel the best opportunities for transformative learning (see Figure 5).

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Guided Reflection	Reflect on relevant topics/course goals Provides prompts	Too restrictive Limited opinions/stylistic elements
Free Reflection	Explore a variety of thoughts and experiences More personal/introspective Unanticipated domains (Sturgill and Motley)	No content restrictions Difficulty staying on task No standard regarding length or quality
Dialogic Reflection	Reinforce key concepts and guide responses Receives feedback from instructor and peers Exposure to other perspectives (Sturgill and Motley)	Writing to the group/groupthink Discretion/perceived judgement may affect authenticity (Sturgill and Motley)
Expressive Reflection	No feedback until end of semester Less filter/more authentic/varied responses	Lack of feedback/direction Lower level of critical thinking
Public Reflection	Wider audience Extends discussion outside of class/ Facilitates broader thinking about issues and contexts	Writing to an audience may affect construction Problems with comments More reserved
Private Reflection	Smaller audience Protects confidentiality	Less engagement Limited feedback

Figure 5: General Models for Reflection

Levels of Reflection

Online writing instructors can also choose from or blend four different levels of reflection; each fosters its own level of inquiry and exploration. Gibbs, Johns, or John Driscoll's frameworks of reflection work well to move students through the rhetorical stages of reflection. The model below, based on Driscoll's, provides descriptions and examples that show how student writers actively engage in reflection about their experiences (see Figure 6).

Type of Reflection	Description	Example
Description	Describes the experience: What did you do? How did you feel?	With five minutes left in my writing professor's online office hours, I clicked on the link and within seconds, her image appeared, and she acknowledged my presence. I had learned early in the semester that my professor is always willing to take time to talk to students. Consequently, I settled back in my chair and started my one-on-one workshop with my teacher even though I could tell she was tired. Nevertheless, she asked me about my current ideas and research. After I closed the window to her office hours, I felt better about my topic and had a better sense of what kind of research I need to include to make this a great paper.
Analysis	Describes the experience including personal judgment: What did you learn about yourself, the community, and the process?	Working in small groups this week made me think about group work and desired outcomes. With a lot to do in the upcoming week, I felt overwhelmed and unprepared to work with my group on peer-editing. One girl in the group completed her paper and was eager for us to read it and provide feedback. I could tell she was frustrated with her group. From this experience, I learned that I need to set aside more time to write papers so that I can use the online peer-editing sessions to improve my paper and to help others improve their papers.
Dialogic	Collaboration examining of one's role in the experience with analysis and critical thinking.	When I stand back now and replay the scene in my mind, I can see how defensive the professor was when I questioned her about her grading scale. I requested more explanation about her rubric and point system, but the professor did not seem happy that I was asking her to provide me with details. Honestly, her reaction made me start to question whether I had a right to ask her about the grade I received and if I had understood the assignment in the first place.
Critical Reflection	Considers the social and political contexts and implications: Assumption analysis, contextual awareness, imaginative speculation, and reflective skepticism (Brookfield)	In the service learning project this semester, we went to a local homeless shelter to work with residents of a year-long program that helps them find jobs or earn a GED. I can see now how I made assumptions about their ability to perform at a desired level. With different backgrounds, interests, and experiences, I don't think the instructor's materials adequately prepared me. However, working with the residents this week made me think critically about stories, communities, and personal responsibility to community partners. Next week, I want to engage more with some of the residents so that we can offer them a greater sense of how literature can serve as a conduit for understanding people's perspectives.

Figure 6: General Types of Reflection

Reflection Rubric

In addition to crafting transformative reflection exercises, instructors should provide students with feedback by using detailed rubrics as well. Using a rubric similar to David Burton's (see Figure 7) to grade

critical reflections creates an opportunity for students to assess if they can or did competently produce high-quality entries that generate connections between the writer, the material, the experience, and future applications of the knowledge.

Criteria	Excellent (1)	Very Good (2)	Satisfactory (3)	Needs Work (4)	Unsatisfactory (5)
Writing Quality	Demonstrates strong writing skills. Excellent grammar, syntax, spelling, and formatting.	Good writing style with solid ability to express meaning. Very good use of mechanics and grammar.	Writing style shows meaning adequately but some grammar and syntax errors.	Little expression of ideas, feelings, and description. Needs work with grammar and syntax.	Lack of expression, ideas, and description. Many grammatical errors.
Description (WHAT HAPPENED?)	Indicates insights into issues and implications. Aware of complexities of issue and situations.	Some insights into issues, and challenges. Shows some level of critical thinking/ complexity	Shows some gains from the experience but few and/or simplistic insights.	Assignment completed but little connection between experience and personal impact.	Resistant or limited to change of attitude. No desire to consider other points of view.
Insights/ Understanding (HOW AND WHY?)	Creates a personal plan of action/ challenge based on course material/ experience.	Creates a plan based on events and course materials.	Increased sensitivity, change of attitude. Shows awareness of connections.	Completed assignment but little connection between experience and personal impact.	Resistant or limited to change of attitude. No desire to consider other points of view.
Commitment and Challenges (NOW WHAT?)	Creates a personal plan of action/ challenge based on course material/ experience.	Creates a plan based on events and course materials.	Committed to class but more development needed for progress.	Somewhat committed to change and meeting challenges.	Lack of immersion and commitment to experience and change.
Progress and Leadership Development (WHAT CONNECTIONS?)	Significant growth and personal development. Clear connections. Stated goals/ objectives.	Increased sensitivity, change of attitude. Shows awareness of connections.	Some progress and leadership.	No progress or plan. Repetitious content regarding connections and experience.	Negative or indifferent in reflection.

Figure 7: Student Critical Reflection Rubric

Instructors can delete or substitute related criteria for each type of reflection assignment if some of the elements do not apply to each task. Assignments can also entail peer assessment; since peer-led learning is a move toward student-centered teaching and more collaborative teaching spaces, peer-led groups offer students spaces to solve problems and exchange ideas (Naude et al.). In an online setting, rubrics posted online provide a writing plan and a system for individualized feedback. Peer groups can also use rubrics in forums or in collaborative documents to target classmates' strengths and weaknesses in reflective writing.

Constructing effective reflection assignments creates scaffolding opportunities for other methods, such as guided revision and instructor feedback, that move students to become more confident and better writers. In addition, depending on the intended student learning outcomes and the course materials, instructors can employ a variety of prompts, guidelines, peer interactions, and feedback exchanges to construct a sense of writing community through reflection assignments that avail themselves to improving students' self-efficacy as well.

Final Thoughts

Undeniably, methods for writing instruction have advanced greatly over the past half century. Educators and researchers continue to discover the benefits of teaching writing as a process and as a social act; online classroom activities should espouse aspects of both ideologies. The relationship between instructor and student can be developed and strengthened in virtual environments and, similar to face-to-face classes, it is a necessary component for student success. In fact, Jan Hughes and Qi Chen assert that "teacher-focused interventions aimed at creating and sustaining affectively positive, encouraging relationships with students represent a critical need" (par. 49). Some of those interventions include providing interactive feedback during stages of the writing process; others require a greater emphasis on reflective writing. Such targeted practices will further solidify and subsequently build students' self-efficacy (Bandura 201), allowing them to rely upon their own self-beliefs to tackle future writing challenges. The development of self-confidence in writing is an important condition of aptitude: students "with strong efficacy [are] better writers" (McCarthy et al. 469). Therefore, online writing instructors should consider instructional methods that promote, nurture, and sustain the development of self-efficacy, which will in turn shape students' attitudes about writing and their potential for success.

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