

Summer 2013

Disconnect to Connect: Encouraging Student Writing Through Interactive Technologies

Natalie M. Dorfeld

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/jostes>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Price, C. (2013). Disconnect to Connect: Encouraging Student Writing Through Interactive Technologies. *Jostes: The Journal of South Texas English Studies*, 4(2), 21-43.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of South Texas English Studies* by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. For more information, please contact justin.white@utrgv.edu, william.flores01@utrgv.edu.

Disconnect to Connect: Encouraging Student Writing Through Interactive
Technologies
Natalie M. Dorfled

Introduction

We have all heard the labels before: Gen X. Gen Y. Gen Z. Even Gen N [for Net] and Gen D [for digital]. But there are two new terms floating around the water cooler today. While some embrace this newfangled terminology, others recoil in fear, wanting no part of it whatsoever. Those terms, according to Marc Prensky (2001), are “digital natives” and “digital immigrants.” The first idiom refers to those individuals, most likely our current students, who were born after 1990. The latter refers to those individuals, the ones teaching them, who were born before 1990 (p. 1).

The generational/technological differences are obvious. One group grew up with technology while the other has adapted (sometimes unwillingly) to the times. But more than that, Dr. Bruce D. Perry of Baylor College of Medicine, who was noted in *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants*, claims, “Different kinds of experiences lead to different brain structures.” That is to say, it is very likely that our students’ brains “have physically changed” because of their 24/7 exposure to technology. One can safely assume the way we were taught, even very our teaching pedagogies, will not be nearly as effective when applied to them (Prensky, 2001, p. 1).

Subsequently, what does this mean for educators today? How can we nurture and develop our students’ identity as writers when most of the time it seems as if we’re living on two different planets, speaking separate languages? Robin Stevens Payes (2011), author of “Digital Natives Get Brain Boost from Technology,” claims students today are wired on multiple stimuli. They excel at electronic multitasking, especially

with writing, which results in social and neurocognitive changes in the brain. She further inquires:

- Will public policy need to evolve as the digital natives grow into adulthood to reflect their refocused brains?
- Is there a cost to this rewiring in other areas of the brain, like sustained attention for activities requiring deeper focus like reading or studying?
- Do schools need to adjust to accommodate these new ways of thinking?
- And do these new brains get passed down genetically to this generation's digital natives' children? (para. 6)

The proposition in this article is simple yet controversial, and that is to meet them

where they are. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogging sites, and Skype are considered by some in academia to be time cannibals, frivolous applications that take away from learning. However, considering digital natives retain 90 percent of all the visuals they see, disregard traditional black and white text, and read top to bottom vs. left to right, the question might then become -- Why haven't we integrated these applications into our composition lesson plans sooner (Mall, 2012)?

Facebook

Facebook, today's most popular social media site, was founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, a Harvard undergraduate at the time. Originally called "the facebook.com," the web site has taken on a life of its own. Current estimates account for 584 million daily active users. To put that into scale, 1 in 12 people in the world right now (yes, this very moment) are on Facebook (Carlson, 2010, para. 2). What

does this mean to composition professors? The answer is simple -- a captive, live audience.

According to a recent study done by Babson Survey Research Group in collaboration with New Marketing Labs and the education-consulting group Pearson Learning Solutions, “more than 80% of college and university faculty use social media in some capacity, and more than half use the tools as part of their teaching” (Blankenship, 2011, p. 40). And of those surveyed, it was reported that older faculty (those with 20+ years of experience) use social media at almost the same level as their younger counterparts (Blankenship, 2011).

Many English professors have set up a Facebook page dedicated to their particular composition class. The professor can tweak the settings, such as adding friends or having students simply like the page, and subsequently add grammar tips, helpful hints, assignments, class discussions, or links to peer reviewed articles / video clips for the students to comment upon. The benefits of such instant accessibility within a likeminded community, such as College Writing 101, according to Howard Rheingold, a professor at Stanford University and the University of California, are “greater engagement, greater interest, students taking more control and responsibility for their education” (Blankenship, 2011, p. 40).

While such technology does present issues, including enough computers for everyone, a clear distinction between personal and professional boundaries, and lack of face-to-face contact, Rheingold insists upon setting some ground rules first, otherwise known as the literacies of social media (Blankenship, 2011).

1. Alertness. With 20 some enthusiastic students all clamoring on their keyboards at once, they can sometimes forget the professor is in front of the classroom. In the article, “Social Media Sharpening Writing Skills,” the US Fed News

Service discusses how some professors lecture for half the class and/or present an informative documentary and then ask students to comment upon the material for the latter portion with detailed instructions. Robert Rubin, senior English lecturer at Wright State, states, “What I'm attempting to do is meet them where they're at -- on Facebook -- while I'm teaching them the conventions of academic writing and see if these two worlds can come together somehow” (“Social Media Sharpening Writing Skills,” 2010, para. 19). Staying on target is key; otherwise, all parties can become overwhelmed and confused.

2. Contribution. Those who participated with one or two word answers, such as “cool” or “good job,” aren't exactly being helpful to their peers. Taking a cue from Harvey Daniels, author of *Literature Circles*, it might be helpful to come up with a set list of questions to be answered, along with a set number of words desired. These directed questions could include:

- How did you feel?
- What was discussed here?
- Did anything surprise you?
- What questions were left unanswered?
- What were you reminded of in particular?
- What are the one or two most important ideas?
- What was going through your mind as you read this?

By doing so, it steers a student away from the easy “yes” and “no” answers, which are not beneficial to the overall contribution (Daniels, 2002).

3. Teamwork. As the old saying goes, there is no “I” in teamwork. Mick Charney, coordinator of K-State's Faculty Exchange for Teaching Excellence, sees his Facebook page as a space for collaborative exchange, which includes photos,

brochures, discussion boards for idea swapping, topics, and workshop activities. It's a place to get students, and even faculty alike, to discuss what books they have been reading and brainstorm for subsequent writing topics. It, in a nutshell, spreads the good word ("Professor Turns to Facebook as Collaborative Learning Tool for Students, Faculty," 2010).

4. Network recognition. This term could mean a lot of things, from mastering settings to social etiquette, but in terms of composition studies, a professor could focus on constructive feedback, which no doubt fosters students' identity as writers. In the article "Improving Student Feedback" by Linda Nilson (2003), she discusses raising awareness by providing a list of strengths and weaknesses. In other words, what is working, and what is not? If done properly, students can learn by example and constructive criticism, such as "your central idea was very clear throughout the essay, but your comma usage needs work" vs. "thumbs up."

5. Critical consumption. Lastly, Rheingold refers to this literacy as "the crap detection, the ability to surf an ocean of online information and decide which nuggets are reliable and which are disposable" (Blankenship, 2011, p. 42). In terms of a teachable moment, many composition professors feel teaching source evaluation is just as important as transitions and overall fluidity. And Wikipedia, well, it just doesn't cut it. A Facebook page in a composition course could link to the school's library, many of which have created YouTube tutorial links on finding solid sources. Not only are they filtered via peer reviews, some even provide MLA and APA citation assistance, which sets students on the right track in terms of avoiding plagiarism ("Prof Explores Wikipedia's Place in Research," 2012).

Facebook, like any digital native tool, can be given a negative connotation because of the trivial things attached to it. This is understandable. However, it is not

going to go away anytime soon. If we, as composition professors, can use it to empower our students to become more aware, thoughtful, and engaged writers, it can be viewed as not only an educational asset but a tremendous medium of academic exchange (Blankenship, 2011).

Twitter

Like Facebook, Twitter is a social media site with followers. According to Tweeter.net, it is a “microblogging service that allows you to answer the question, ‘What are you doing?’ by sending short text messages 140 characters in length, called ‘tweets,’ to your friends, or ‘followers’” (2013, para. 1). Unlike Facebook, however, it is “a less gated” communication. Tweets can be shared with people that you normally would not e-mail, which opens up one’s circle of contact even wider (2013, para. 2). Individuals can receive tweets by using the official Twitter website, instant messenger, e-mail, or even a third party application.

Dr. Kimberly Miller, an Assistant Professor of Communications at Grove City College, uses Twitter regularly in her journalism classroom. She states:

I feel it enhances student writing in a few ways. For one, they interact much more frequently [versus face to face] when using Twitter regarding assignments or class work. It gets the conversation going. Secondly, as their professor, I tweet or retweet articles that I want them to read. I use the hashtag #comm235, so that students can search easily for class information and articles. Lastly, once they comment on the articles, we can discuss them in class, which gets the creative juices flowing. And on a side note, it’s greener. It is very helpful in the sense that it saves me

photocopying articles they will likely throw away. (personal communication, April 5, 2013)

As someone who teaches reporting, she also stresses that Twitter helps her students expand their horizons by following reputable sources/organizations in their future careers, track news sources (both agreeable and disagreeable) in order to understand all sides of an issue, and make connections in the field by learning from professionals and following current trends.

And like Facebook, it does come with its share of anti-intellectual criticism. Mary Knudson, who now requires her students in her medical writing class to Twitter from a scientific conference, thought it would destroy one's ability to spell. Twitter is known for dropped vowels and missing numerals in place of words. However, she turned over a new leaf when, like Dr. Miller, she saw the fervent interaction between students (Kinzie, 2009).

In the article, "Some Professors' Jitters Over Twitter Are Easing; Discussions Expand In and Out of Class," Knudson says not only does Twitter teach students to write succinctly with its strict limit, it also enables them to share valuable information. This includes links to stories about scientific discoveries, web sites with fresh research, and other material she, as the professor, would have never come across on her own. Furthermore, once class is done, it's done. Twitter keeps going. It allows students to "share research, pose questions, and gather information . . . some use it to keep students engaged in large lecture halls by fostering a running online dialogue during class" (Kinzie, 2009 p. B.1). In addition to amplified student interaction and a collective sharing of ideas, Twitter produces another interesting byproduct in a bigger is always better society -- conciseness. Students at American University are encouraged to use Twitter as a learning tool to write briefly and in a way

that's engaging enough to capture the reader's attention. Professor Danna Walker feels such brevity is imperative in today's fast paced world, where students and professors alike are always in a hurry. She encourages students to craft thoughtful, precise questions to her lectures, which are then digitally archived. She says she wants to hit them where they live, adding, "They're used to communicating this way -- via text-message and Facebook -- so this is a great way to get them engaged in class. At least, that's my theory" (Kinzie, 2009, p. B.1). And she is spot on. In the last two years, Twitter usage has doubled. There are now more than 200 million active users posting more than 175 million tweets a day, according to studies found in *Educational Forum* ("Beyond Bieber: Twitter Improves Student Learning," 2012).

Whether it's recurrent interaction, sharing information with peers, or the conciseness that both students and professors can appreciate at times, Twitter has found a place in today's composition classes. At its best, "it creates a virtual collective stream of consciousness, a real-time flow of sometimes funny, sometimes newsy, sometimes thought-provoking observations, photos, conversations, documents, questions, videos and links" (Kinzie, 2009, p. B.1). Furthermore, as a result of this immediacy and authenticity, writing professors have noted more writing through this site vs. face-to-face class settings. Because the students are engaged and connected to something tangible, enthusiasm blossoms. Grades suddenly perk up. Everything advances, as does their thirst for learning. Twitter is, indeed, not only changing the way people teach but also the way people learn ("Beyond Bieber: Twitter Improves Student Learning," 2012).

YouTube

YouTube, which is a web site featured heavily on Facebook and Twitter, specializes in user-made and posted videos. Beginning in 2005, the site was later purchased by Google for a tidy one and a half billion dollars. Today, it boasts over twenty million viewers. Media honchos, such as CBS, Universal, and Warner, have agreed to provide content to the site and license copyrighted material in order to better reach their target audiences (“What is YouTube?,” 2006-2013).

In terms of writing in the humanities, this digital platform gives uncanny access to today’s students through photos, interviews, musical clips, and raw footage of historical events. The unfiltered feed can transport individuals to another era, thus bringing the black and white pages of a textbook to life, and bridging the often slippery divide between general education and technology education (Cowan, 2008).

Dr. Joel Lewis, Assistant Professor of History at Dixie State University, says in an era of technological savvy and instant communication, educators can no longer ignore the integration of multi-media and internet resources in the classroom. Specifically with the field of history, students need visual images and audio commentary in order to prevent monotony. The implementation of YouTube videos is an effective way to engage students on a cultural, emotional, and intellectual level that converts meaningless names and dates into a narrative about the human experience (personal interview, April 6, 2013).

In this class, students watch approximately ten minutes of YouTube clips and write a one page reflection journal about the videos. He further elaborates:

I developed a YouTube channel (youtube.com/drjalewis) for my American Civilization survey courses that has historical interviews, documentary clips, cartoon, and music videos associated with the materials that we

are covering. For the first eight weeks of the semester, students watch interviews with the authors of our textbooks, assisting them in understanding the human element of writing history and how professional bias is shaped by life experiences. By putting a face and a voice to the texts, students gain a deeper appreciation of the ‘historian’s craft’ and the process of storytelling. Starting during week nine, students watch short five minute documentary clips on our lecture subjects as well as a ‘photo slideshow’ set to folk songs about that particular era. This combination of documentary information and folk music provides a cultural and emotional connection with students. (personal interview, April 6, 2013)

Additionally, when covering the cold War era, Dr. Lewis states that his students watch American and Soviet versions of classic children’s cartoons, such as Winnie the Pooh, to understand varying perceptions of youth culture and how caricatures were manipulated as forms of propaganda. By doing so, they begin to make the connections between the past and present, thus their writing becomes more personal, rawer if you will (personal interview, April 6, 2013).

Rebecca Nappi (2011), author of “Racist Cartoons, Revived on YouTube, Offer Teaching Moments,” also piggybacks on the notion that the past repeats itself. She examines racist cartoons dating from the 1930s-1960s to highlight every stereotype from “African-Americans, Asian-Americans, women and other once-marginalized groups in ways that make you cringe” (para. 5). The professors in the article ask students – Are these relics from the past helpful or harmful to our country’s ongoing discussions about race? They waste little time relating the stereotypes of the past, some often subliminal in cartoons, to the racial prejudices of today. One student

noted, “I remember as a child going downtown, and Caucasian kids would see me and talk like an Asian person, or do the slant-eyed thing,” she said. “They had never met me, and the only way they formed their impressions, I’m sure, was through television” (Nappi, 2011, para. 32). Another added, “When we meet Speedy Gonzales, he is working at a carnival booth that says, ‘Win Beeg Prize.’ The mice repeatedly use the phrase ‘gotted an idea.’ Throughout the cartoon, the mice’s language and pronunciation are very degrading” (Nappi, 2011, para. 15).

By showing how far we have come, or not come in certain areas, YouTube has proven to be an invaluable teaching asset in that it can bring texts to life, convert cluttersome data into a narrative human experience, and help students make sense of their history. The medium has been proven to aid composition studies and students’ voices because it so seamlessly combines the multiple channels of teaching, including standard lecturing, audio clips, and visual representations of a given topic. This “visual literacy” improves accuracy, persuasiveness, and competency in writing (“Across More Classes, Videos Make the Grade,” 2011).

Blogs

A blog, according to Susan Gunelius (2013), is a web site containing a series of posts from a writer. They most likely appear in reverse chronological order. They can feature one’s thoughts, videos, artwork, or links to various other sites. In terms of definitions, she states there are several adaptations:

Variations of the term *blog*:

- Blogging: The act of writing a post for a blog
- Blogger: A person who writes content for a blog

- Blogosphere: The online community of blogs and bloggers (Gunelius, 2013, para. 3)

It is estimated that there are over 100 million blogs entering cyberspace on a daily basis. Becoming more than just personal diaries and/or rants, they have become an integral part of “the online and offline worlds with popular bloggers impacting the worlds of politics, business and society with their words” (Gunelius, 2013, para. 8).

Harry Brake, a composition teacher at American School Foundation, in Mexico City, Mexico, is a frequent blogger with a large following. He requires each of his students to setup an account on WordPress.org for his writing classes. The virtual element, he feels, allows for that openness and level of freedom for creativity in writing. It gives students a sense of freedom and publishing on the web, yet can reinforce some tight requirements, while still allowing the openness and possibility of publishing. Whether it’s ten people or 8,000, he views the level of responses coming back to allow a different type of medium for communicating about writing, which can enhance the one-to-one interactions (personal communication, April 7, 2013). He elaborates:

I also can use it as a precursor to publishing on the web. Students can learn etiquette alongside writing on the web, for a set period, before they begin a larger project or one that leads to a wiki. I feel they become better writers because they do not feel like they are wearing a corset, as the lines of communication are open more for reluctant writers that feel it is confrontational to talk about their own work in public. It also allows those that are overboard and vocal about their writing to have the ability

to see when to weed out and edit when it is in front of them on a screen.

(personal interview, April 7, 2013)

In addition to Brake's thoughts, particularly freeing up modes of communication, Kathleen West (2008), author "Weblogs and Literary Response: Socially Situated Identities and Hybrid Social Languages in English Class Blogs," adds that blogs strengthen students' identity as writers in a way that formal essays (with the option of revising it afterwards) cannot.

The medium of blogging has helped students foster their own writing styles, share personal stories, infuse personalities (whether sarcastic or serious), and meet deadlines. Students were twice as likely to finish their assignments through this medium vs. typical essays, where no audience except for the teacher was involved (West, 2008). Why so, one might ask? Their work is intimately connected to their "values and interests" (Gee, p. 41, 2005). They care about their craft, and they are receiving immediate feedback from not only classmates, but perhaps from readers around the globe. This form of educational scaffolding, which can include teacher-student interactions, written questions, peer revisions, creating writing prompts, writing frames, etc., helps students' expression of understanding of any given composition process (Hew and Wong, 2012). According to their article, "The Impact of Blogging and Scaffolding on Primary School Pupils' Narrative Writing: A Case Study," writing grades, both for their teachers and those prompts written for standardized tests, improve significantly with the integration of blogging into the classroom. Several students added:

- "When we write, our friends cannot comment freely on our paper. When we blog, our friends can comment easily on our blog, and we can easily improve our writing through their comments."

- “When we write on paper, we cannot add pictures to make our writing more interesting. [With blogging,] we can add pictures and other things to make our writing more interesting.”
- “When writing on paper, we have to rewrite the whole draft. When blogging, we only have to rewrite the parts we want to change. The rest could be easily copied and pasted. This will also help me focus on the problem areas and not make me exhausted . . . a reason why some felt that writing was tiring.” (Hew and Wong, 2012, p. 1)

In today’s world, young people want to feel like they’re helping and contributing to their education. They want their thoughts and opinions heard (Bohn, 2009). Blogging allows students to open up and share their beliefs, foster their own writing styles, and improve grades through educational scaffolding. Engagement is bottom line, and this medium promotes both interaction and exclusivity on all academic fronts.

Skype

Skype is a free web site that lets individuals text, voice, or video back and forth. It can be done over the computer, phone, or television, although the computer is the most popular medium thus far. In fact, the interviewing landscape has forever been changed, as now employers are using Skype in pre-finalist interviews instead of the telephone. At peak times during the day, over 40 million users are online with Skype (“What is Skype?,” 2013).

Regarding composition and student feedback, Skype has proven itself a worthy contributor in three ways: conversing with authors, working around natural disasters, overall convenience. In the article, “An Author in Every Classroom: Kids Connecting with Authors via Skype. It’s the Next Best Thing to Being There,” author

Kate Messner (2010) interviews award-winning author Laurie Halse Anderson.

Anderson states that video conferencing has become a staple for educators who want to get students excited about learning. They add:

The past year has brought a huge increase in the number of schools and libraries using Skype to connect classrooms and bring in experts to talk with kids. And with cuts in school funding limiting traditional author visits, meet ups via Skype have grown even more popular. 'For every day I would normally spend presenting in a school, I used to have an additional two days spent organizing the visit and traveling. I simply don't have that kind of time anymore . . . Plus, tight budgets have made it hard for schools to continue to fund in-school author visits. Skype allows schools to connect me to their students in a way that's affordable for them and feasible for me.' (Messner, 2010, p. 42)

The medium gathers students in a group. They discuss the appointed book, which they have already read in advance, and many prepare individual questions for the author. The interaction, in turn, provides them with immediate feedback on their own writing, including -- How did you start? Where should I start? How can I get in contact with a publisher? How do I know if that person is reputable? How do I find an illustrator? Like that article states, it's the next best thing to being there, a win-win situation for everyone involved (Messner, 2010).

A second and often overlooked benefit of Skype is working around natural disasters. When Hurricane Sandy hit the east coast in 2012, many students were left homeless and without vehicles. If they were fortunate enough to possess both, they probably couldn't navigate through the streets due to uprooted trees and rubble. At the University of Maryland, educators took this into account and set up classes (for

those with Internet access but no means of getting to school) via Skype (“University of Maryland - Inspired Recover Writing Program Aims to Help Students Hit by Hurricane Sandy,” 2012).

The “remote tutoring help” base allowed students to recover, at least partially, from weeks of missed courses. Belinda Kremer, Writing Center Director, devised an emergency tutoring relief program, known as Recover Writing, and sent an email to the national writing center mail list. She received an overwhelming and heartfelt response:

To date, more than 20 colleges and universities, from California to Mississippi to Idaho, have posted descriptions of the writing help they can provide to the initiative’s Facebook page. Some of the schools have opened existing online tutoring services to distressed students; others offer to connect tutors with students via Skype, email, or phone. The number is growing every day, Kremer adds. (“University of Maryland - Inspired Recover Writing Program Aims to Help Students Hit by Hurricane Sandy,” 2012, para 7).

By setting up such a system, students were tutored on a variety of subjects, primarily composition, when they otherwise would have been lost, frustrated, and terribly behind. The immediate feedback left behind a footprint of kindness in a gut-wrenching disaster (“University of Maryland - Inspired Recover Writing Program Aims to Help Students Hit by Hurricane Sandy,” 2012).

Lastly, in terms of combining the previous two notions, Skype provides convenience for both parties involved. Dawson, et al. (2013), in the article “Creating a Breathing Space: An Online Teachers’ Writing Group,” discusses the ease of usage for a writing group. Given that the members lived hundreds of miles away from one

another, meeting at the local coffee shop wasn't going to cut it. Instead, they met at the same time every week and collectively discussed the challenges of the teaching, the isolating moments, lesson plans, and their own work. One participant stated:

As important as that reconnecting time is, however, our discussion of each other's writing is truly at the heart of our meetings. In some cases, our writing allows us to work through challenges associated with teaching. During our first years together, group members wrote multi-voiced poems to make sense of interactions with students, humorous narratives about classroom challenges, essays about fearing failure in the classroom, and journals about fighting to avoid being consumed by teaching demands. Both writing and talking about these texts provided critical ways of reflecting on experiences and seeking support. Our writing also helps us escape from teaching when we want to, to play with humor and fiction writing, to write about our families and friends, and to think through relationships and past experiences. (Dawson, et al., 2012, p. 97)

In other words, the nonteaching texts provided via Skype proved to be just as vital as any texts written about teaching. By constantly bouncing ideas back and forth with one another, these teachers were able to “experiment more freely with genre, topic, style, and technique.” This not only benefited their classrooms/students, but the movement promoted their growth as writers and colleagues through a supported, interactive system (Dawson, et al., 2012, p. 95).

In times where everyone cannot meet up at once and unnecessary plane journeys are discouraged in order to save a buck for the company, Skype has proved itself to be beneficial in fostering students', teachers', and colleagues' writing skills due

to its maneuverability and popularity. If one cannot be there, as stated over and over again, Skype is the next best option (Keegan, 2008).

Conclusion

In the article, “We’re Teaching Books That Don’t Stack Up,” author Nancy Schnog feels we (as educators) often teach the way we were taught, rehashing dated pedagogies, recycling the so-called classics, and lecturing the whole period because it is considered safe. Our students, however, fail to see the connections to their modern day and become bored (Schnog, 2008).

Digital natives (those who have grown up with technology) and digital immigrants (those who have adapted to it) may seem very different beings at first glance. They see things differently, partially because of the generation gap but also because of the onslaught of technology. In order to bridge this gap in academia, particularly with encouraging students to broaden their identity as writers, it has been proposed that more digital immigrants infuse technology into their lesson plans (Weinberger, 2008).

By including the popular (and free) applications, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogging sites, and Skype, students receive immediate feedback, retain 90% of the pictures they see, and retain 70% of the information vs. traditionally taught lessons (teacher speaks / students listen), where they only retain 15% of the lesson (Mall, 2012). Why is this? “Because the visual cortex of the digital native’s brain is 20 percent larger than brains measured 25 years ago and so they are very visual. To best reach them, you have to design visual lessons for them” (Mall, 2012, para. 1).

Like it or not, technology is here to stay. Soon, the natives will greatly outnumber the immigrants (Weinberger, 2008). These applications have the capability

to nurture students' writing through feedback from their professors, peers, and students across the globe. When used correctly, and within the parameters of an academic setting, videos, photos, links, and face-to-face chats provide instantaneous feedback to strengthen the whole language learning experience. Therefore, the next time a hesitant digital immigrant asks – Why? -- perhaps the best response is – Why not? Better yet, why not now?

References

- Across More Classes, Videos Make the Grade. (2011). *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, N.p. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/865547079?accountid=27313>
- Beyond Bieber: Twitter Improves Student Learning. (2012, Oct 17). *Targeted News Service*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1112709178?accountid=27313>
- Blankenship, M. (2011). How social media can and should impact higher education. *The Education Digest*, 76(7), 39-42. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/848431918?accountid=27313>
- Bohn, D. M. (2009). Engaging Net Generation Learners by Incorporating Their “Hot Topics” Into the Classroom. *NACTA Journal*, 53(4), 67-68. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/214376183?accountid=27313>
- Carlson, N. (2010, March 5). At Last – The Full Story How Facebook Was Founded. *Business Insider*. Retrieved from <http://www.businessinsider.com/how-facebook-was-founded-2010-3>
- Cowan, J. E. (2008). Special Issue on Technology: Introduction. *The Clearing House*, 82(2), 53-54. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/196841397?accountid=27313>
- Daniels, H. (2002). Expository Text in Literature Circles. *Voices from the Middle*, 9(4), 7-14. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/213932200?accountid=27313>

- Dawson, C. M., Robinson, E. L., Hanson, K., VanRiper, J., Ponzio, C., & Fink, L. S., R.W.T. (2013). Creating a breathing space: An online teachers' writing group. *English Journal*, 102(3), 93-99. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1287039157?accountid=27313>
- Gee, J.P. (2005). *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis Theory and Method* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Gunelius, S. (2013). What is a Blog? *About.com*. Retrieved from <http://weblogs.about.com/od/startingablog/p/WhatIsABlog.htm>
- Hew, K. F., & Wong, R. M. F. (2010). The Impact of Bogging and Scaffolding on Primary School Pupils' Narrative Writing: A Case Study. *International Journal of Web-Based Learning and Teaching Technologies*, 5(2), 1+. Retrieved from <http://go.galegroup.com.portal.lib.fit.edu/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA237942343&v=2.1&u=melb26933&it=r&p=AONE&sw=w>
- Kinzie, S. (2009, Jun 26). Some Professors' Jitters Over Twitter Are Easing; Discussions Expand In and Out of Class. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/410299262?accountid=27313>
- Mall, K. (2012, February 15). Are You Reaching Your Digital Natives? *Scholastic*. Retrieved from <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/topteaching/2012/02/are-you-reaching-your-digital-natives>
- Messner, K. (2010, September). An Author in Every Classroom: Kids Connecting With Authors via Skype. It's the Next Best Thing to Being There. *School Library Journal*, 56(9), 42+. Retrieved from <http://go.galegroup.com.portal.lib.fit.edu/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA236631964&v=2.1&u=melb26933&it=r&p=ITOF&sw=w>

- Nappi, R. (2011, Feb 19). Racist Cartoons, Revived on YouTube, Offer Teaching Moments. *McClatchy - Tribune Business News*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/852712429?accountid=27313>
- Nilson, L. B. (2003). Improving Student Peer Feedback. *College Teaching*, 51(1), 34.
- Prensky, M. (2001). Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants. *On the Horizon*, 9 (5), 1-6.
- Payes, R. (2011, January 7). Digital Natives Get Brain Boost from Technology. *Developing Minds in Science*. Retrieved from <http://developingmindsinscience.blogspot.com/2011/01/digital-natives-get-brain-boost-from.html>
- Prof Explores Wikipedia's Place in Research. (2012, Dec 28). *Targeted News Service*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1265581660?accountid=27313>
- Professor Turns to Facebook as Collaborative Learning Tool for Students, Faculty. (2010, August 26). *Internet Wire*. Retrieved from <http://go.galegroup.com.portal.lib.fit.edu/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA235634867&v=2.1&u=melb26933&it=r&p=ITOF&sw=w>
- Schnog, N. (2008, Aug 24). We're Teaching Books That Don't Stack Up. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/410239848?accountid=27313>
- Social media sharpening writing skills. (2010, Dec 16). *US Fed News Service, Including US State News*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/818433745?accountid=27313>
- Twitter Explained. (2013). *Twitter.net*. Retrieved from <http://tweeter.net/>

University of Maryland - Inspired Recover Writing Program Aims to Help Students Hit
by Hurricane Sandy, (2012, Nov 12). *Targeted News Service*. Retrieved from

<http://search.proquest.com/docview/1151773067?accountid=27313>

Weinberger, D. (2008). Digital Natives, Immigrants and Others. *KM World*, 17, 1-1,24.

Retrieved from

<http://search.proquest.com/docview/197269281?accountid=27313>

West, K. C. (2008). Weblogs and Literary response: Socially Situated Identities and
Hybrid Social Languages in English Class Blogs. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult*

Literacy, 51(7), 588-590,592,594,596-598. Retrieved from

<http://search.proquest.com/docview/216922312?accountid=27313>