

MAKING BRICKS WITHOUT STRAW:
TEACHING AND ASSESSING NEW LITERACY
SKILLS AT A SMALL, PRIVATE HBCU

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“I had always sympathized with the “Children of Israel,” in their task of “making bricks without straw,” but ours was the task of making bricks with no money and no experience.”

Booker T. Washington, Up from Slavery, 1919.

I graduated from Wilberforce University in 1997 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Literature in 1997. When I matriculated to Wilberforce, I was a 19-year old freshman, who did not know what “matriculated” meant. Graduating from high school was the result of a small miracle; I graduated on time, but I just barely met the minimum requirements by the State of Ohio. I attended a vocational high school, and my “major” was Dental Arts; I worked as a dental assistant as part of my curriculum, and continued working at the dental office full-time after I graduated. My mother became ill shortly after I graduated from high school, so I started working a part-time job at a call center, so I would not be a financial burden to her, and so I could help out with some of household expenses. Between my full-time job at the dental office and my part-time job at the call center and I worked an average of nearly 80 hours a week, both during the day and evening hours. I did not have the time or the desire to sit in a classroom for hours during the day, so traditional college was not an option, so I enrolled in several telecourses at Sinclair Community College after graduation in 1991.

Enrolling in the telecourses seemed like a good idea at the time. The classes fit my schedule, I was able to work at my own pace, and did not require face-to-face class attendance or any interaction with the instructor or my classmates. I never had to go to class, or even visit the campus for the entire quarter, except to register and pick up the course materials, which consisted of a series of recorded lectures on a stack of rubber-band bound VHS tapes and a thick course packet full of assignments. I intended to watch the videos and complete the assignments during my downtime, however, that time never manifested. Between my work schedule and taking care of my mother, I was not able to complete any of the assignments and failed every class. The VHS tapes sat on my desk for the entire quarter, and my first attempt at college was an epic failure.

At the dental office, I was eating lunch in the make-shift break room at the office, when one of the office assistants proudly announced that she submitted her resignation; she was going to college. I became intrigued; I did not consider her or myself as “college-material.” We both graduated from the same vocational high school, and were both mediocre students at best, so I was surprised to hear her say that she was going to college. I thought “if she could do it, I know I can,” but I dismissed the thought almost as quickly as I had it. Later that week, I asked my co-worker for some information about the college she was about to attend. By the end of the week, I had a glossy informational brochure and an admissions application for Wilberforce University. I never heard of the college, even though it was less than 40 miles from my house, but I completed the application and mailed it the same day, with a little help from my college-bound coworker. I was accepted to Wilberforce University, and enrolled in the university as a non-residential freshman in 1992. My first semester at Wilberforce was a tumultuous experience; I was struggling even in my remedial classes, struggling to adapt to college life, as I had no mentor to help me through the transition, and struggling with balancing my job, my family, and classes. I attended my classes during the day, checked on my mother after classes, and worked full-time at the call-center at night, which was my routine until I graduated from Wilberforce University four years later. I nearly gave up in my sophomore year, until

two of my professors encouraged me to stay, telling me that they great potential in me, and volunteered to be my tutors during times that fit into my schedule. Fifteen years later, I found myself standing in the same classrooms at Wilberforce University, not as a student, but as an Assistant Professor of English. My story is common for many students who attended and graduated from an HBCU; not considered “college-material” by their teachers or themselves, but were encouraged or invited to an HBCU. Many faculty and staff members at HBCUs are also alumni, and return to their institutions, or similar institutions, after obtaining advanced degrees because they are graduates, to some degree, products, of an HBCU; I am a product of the university, and I am convinced that I would not have graduated with a college degree if I had not attended Wilberforce University.

Many students who attend HBCUs come from low-income families and are first-generation college students, meaning that they, their siblings, or other relatives in their generation are the first ones to attend college. These students are at risk of dropping out not for academic reasons but simply because they do not have the money to continue (Cole, 2011; Crow, 2007). In addition, if students must miss class because of illness, family issues, or problems with adapting to college life, they can still participate and complete the class successfully using electronic communication methods; however, when students possess low levels of New Literacy Skills, it often too difficult for them to continue to participate in class.

Wilberforce University is a small private Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in Southwest Ohio and it was the first privately owned and operated HBCU in the country. The liberal arts university experienced a sharp decline in enrollment in the year 2005 and has experienced a steady downward spiral in financial decline resulting in a declaration of financial exigency in 2005. Currently, at Wilberforce University, I teach many of my first-year writing courses using a hybrid model; part of instruction is delivered online, part is delivered face-to-face in a physical classroom. I spend the first few weeks just familiarizing students with the technology. If and when students are not able to attend class, they are not deprived of the lesson. Implementing components of Online Writing

Instruction (OWI) combined with face-to-face writing instruction in a hybrid or technology-enhanced model may improve students' performance in the course and increase retention in first-year students, than do face-to-face writing instruction alone.

Wilberforce University, and other small private HBCUs, will benefit as an institution by teaching students principles of New Literacy Skills to adequately prepare them to successfully take classes delivered in a hybrid format or wholly online format. Students will become aware of the skills and habits they will need to successfully complete an online course. Students will be able to obtain the principles of those skills, New Literacy Skills, as they relate to First-Year Composition (FYC), and be able to apply those skills and principles to their upper-division courses, regardless of the format that those classes are delivered. Increasingly, programs and courses overall are incorporating more technology; the tools continue to change rapidly, but the principles of New Literacy Skills are applicable and transferable to other classes, programs, and format, including ground, technology-enhanced, hybrid, and wholly online courses.

Teaching students New Literacy Skills (NLS) during their first-year writing series will be beneficial to students, in both their academic and professional writing, particularly as first-year instructors, as students' performance/success during their first and second year are good indicators of whether or not students will persist and finish their degree. Many first-year students are enrolled in lower-division course, from remedial-level, non-credit preparatory courses to 200-level courses during their first year as they transition from high school to college. If students are able to enroll and complete classes online, without being location-bound, the institution will be able to recruit and retain students outside of the area, as well as allow students to take online classes, within the institution, during academic breaks, when students normally enroll in classes at community colleges or other local colleges, they can maintain matriculation within the institution without having to physically be on campus. By allowing students to maintain matriculation, without having to physically be present,

these institutions may increase their enrollment, as well as increase their graduation and completion rates, as students must “stop out” or withdraw from college temporarily (Crow, 2007).

Students often “stop-out” for both social and school-related reasons; many students at Wilberforce University, and other HBCUs, must make the difficult decision between continuing their education on campus, or temporarily “stopping out,” taking a temporary leave of absence from the campus with the intent to return after they have resolved a challenging circumstance that prevents regular attendance, which in my experience, is the primary reason that students fail my first-year writing classes. Wilberforce does not require students to complete the FYC series in a strict chronological sequence. Students may take ENGL 111 in their first semester and enroll in ENGL 112 in their last semester; the only requirement is that students must earn credit for the courses, ENGL 111 and ENGL 112, either by completing the coursework or exempting exam, before they graduate. Most students take ENGL 111 their first semester, because their advisor places them into an open section, but students may complete the ENGL 112 course at any time before they graduate.

HBCUs are generally small, having a total enrollment of less than 5,000 students; smaller institutions, public or private, HBCU or PWI — generally have fewer resources to develop and administer online programs alongside their face-to-face ones, even though many black colleges function with relatively small budgets and serve significant populations of low-income students in need of generous financial aid (Kolowich, 2010). As with many private colleges, Wilberforce University derives the majority of its operating budget from students’ tuition. Small private colleges, especially private HBCUS, often lack the supplemental streams of income as their state counterparts, as they receive little funding from athletic programs and events, state funding sources, healthy endowments, or large donations from wealthy alumni. Private HBCUs often lack the financial resources to purchase licensing agreements for commercial Learning Management Systems (LMS), such as BlackBoard, WebCT, and Desire2Learn, to accommodate under-prepared students in first-

year composition courses, and teach New Literacy Skills that students need to excel in a digital society.

The hybrid model often allows me to maintain communication with my students outside of class meeting times to increase student-teacher interaction using electronic communication, such as emails, blog posts, and instant messages may allow students to have an opportunity to apply New Literacy Skills, in their academic and professional writing. Online course design and pedagogy for writing courses should ascribe to professional and organizational guidelines for best practices of teaching Composition for Online Writing Instruction (OWI), regardless of the method of delivery.

Similarly, online instructors need to seek educational preparation through their universities and professional organizations in the use of current technologies and technological tools and in the use of an effective online pedagogy with regard to those technologies and tools, even when the industry-standard tools and technologies are not available, the principles of applying New Literacy Skills to teach students to be successful in online courses and programs are applicable and useful in hybrid and wholly online writing courses. In my previous teaching positions at larger state universities, I taught writing online in a hybrid format to students with varying levels of digital and technical literacy skills, however, I did not have access and licenses to use a commercial LMS, such as Angel, BlackBoard, and Desire2Learn, or proprietary versions of these products. At Wilberforce, I submitted a request to our IT director for permission and digital tools to use as an LMS, which he declined citing a lack of financial resources to legally purchase software licenses for those classes. As Reilly and Williams noted, there are often subtle “institutional pressures” on members of any organization to use whatever software is encouraged by their institutions (2006, p.72). I was encouraged to use any software or system that would not cost the university additional money or time for the IT department, and that would keep student’s personal data secure.

Financial constraints prevented me from purchasing licensing for any commercial or proprietary LMS to use as pedagogical tools to teach students about New Literacy Skills, as well as a vehicle for students to apply those skills, so I designed my own digital writing course using several free, open source tools, including a free blogging site to distribute the course syllabi, announcements, assignment descriptions, and handouts to teach students the principles of New Literacy Skills.

For the most part, when Wilberforce University faculty members incorporate technology into their courses, in an effort to meet the challenge to teach “21st Century skills,” they merely refer students to the Internet to conduct research outside of class or, possibly, to email their responses and grades on students’ essays (Redd, 2003;NCTE, 2010). As Teresa Redd noted, in her article “Tryin’ to Make a Dolla’ Outta’ Fifteen Cent’ (2003) “in the 1980s, most HBCUs were stuck at the bottom of the digital divide. Hampton University, in Hampton, Va., started offering online graduate degrees a decade ago, and has since expanded its online reach. Companies like Education Online Services Corp. have recently established relationships with private HBCUs like Virginia University in Lynchburg, VA., and Tougaloo College in Tougaloo, MS., to develop their online programs at a lower cost than they could have on their own.

While the private HBCU sector may have financial incentive to start a potentially lucrative online program, most of the HBCU online programs are housed at larger state universities. In fact, 12 of the 20 largest HBCUs, in terms of enrollment, offer some form of online degree according to Beasley’s study. However, among the top 20 HBCUs with the highest graduation rates—a strong indicator of an institution’s academic quality—only seven have adopted a full online degree program (Burnsed, 2010). Progress towards providing online course offerings at private HBCUs has been slow and modest at best; from two to six programs since 2006. Overall, the proportion of HBCUs, both public and private, offering online degree programs remains low, compared to the Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) that offer fully online programs where at least 80 % of the work is completed online. Of the nation’s 105 HBCUs, only nineteen of those colleges and universities offer

online degrees. Beasley says that "financial pressure is causing private HBCUs to now take a second look [at online education] and I think that's a good thing," he says. "Private HBCUs had [previously] shown very limited interest in non-traditional students" (Beasley, 2010). Most of the colleges that offered distance learning methods focused on programs for graduate students and professional or career certification.

Currently, there is little scholarship and no widely published models to reference for small colleges to incorporate technology to enhance first-year writing courses or implement wholly online writing courses at small institutions. Students at small private HBCU, has been largely ignored by Composition scholars, but the demographic as a whole requires more research and attention from computing and technology scholars, as the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) reports, thirty-one of the thirty-nine private HBCUs report enrollments that are well-below 2,500 students. Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) are excluded from the professional conversation; either by choice or by their own omission. There is a need to include those faculty members into the professional conversation concerning New Literacy Skills, especially as they relate to Online Writing Instruction (OWI) in first-year writing courses. The purpose of this Participatory Action Research (PAR) study is to collect and compile a body of best practices of first-year writing instructors for teaching and assessing New Literacy Skills using Online Writing Instruction (OWI), from the perspective of the participants within the small, private HBCU. This study examined what Wilberforce University community of scholars, as well as other first-year instructors at other small, private Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), perceives to be the best practices for teaching writing using Online Writing Instruction (OWI) using free or low-cost tools technologies in first-year writing courses.

Theme: Making Bricks Without Straw

Instructors of first-year writing are often tasked with teaching students New Literacy Skills as learning outcomes in first-year writing courses. At Wilberforce University, as directed by the former Vice-President of Academic Affairs at Wilberforce University, First-Year writing instructors must assess the course-level outcomes that will equip students with the necessary skills to “explore and exploit new information; to identify what information they need to be successful in life and work, know how to find information, efficiently, evaluate the quality of information, and use information effectively and ethically.” Our former Vice-President directed all first-year writing faculty to implement and assess these course-level outcomes without any direction or recommendations or how to accomplish this task, and without providing any tools or resources to assist with fulfilling this charge. This task is one that I compare to “making bricks without straw,” a colloquial phrase that refers to completing a difficult task without adequate tools or supplies. The phrase is an allusion to the Biblical book of Exodus 5:6-11, when Moses requested the pharaoh to release the Israelites from their captivity, he refused. In his anger, the pharaoh forced the Israelites to make the same quota of bricks without providing the straw to make the bricks. In verses 10-11, the Pharaoh relayed the message to his slave drivers to deliver to the Israelite slaves “I will not give you any more straw. Go and get your own straw wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced at all” (Exodus 5:6-11; NIV Version). My primary focus for this study is to address teaching and assessing New Literacy Skills to students with low levels of academic literacy skills (alphabetic, technical, critical, and rhetorical literacy skills), without having access to commercial or proprietary digital technology and digital tools to teach students these New Literacy Skills.

The amended Higher Education Act of 1965 defined Historically Black Colleges and Universities as any accredited institution of higher education founded prior to 1964 whose primary mission was, and continues to be, the education of Black Americans, according to the U.S Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights (1991). Thompson (1973), a historian of

historically black colleges and universities and former Vice-president at Wilberforce University, mentions the connection between the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, the exodus of emancipated slaves from the South the North, and the rise of the HBCU to provide an education or teach skilled trades to those emancipated slaves.

Both the Israelites in the Bible, and the 18th Century African-American were enslaved and emancipated, as some would argue, by two miracles; the parting of the Red Sea and the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, the outcomes of their stories after their liberation differed sharply. In 1827, Emancipation Day in New York, Austin Steward, who was a runaway slave, risked his freedom and his life to deliver the Emancipation Day address in Rochester, New York, on July 5th, directly after the American Independence Day celebration. In his speech, Steward compared the emancipation of the Israelites in the Biblical book of Exodus, to the hope of emancipation and equality that African Americans, both enslaved and freed, in this country. Steward remarked on the struggle of African-Americans, thankful for his own freedom, yet remarking on the unfulfilled “American Dream” that was comparable of the Israelites’ exodus, saying:

Like the people of God in Egypt, you have been afflicted; but like them too, you have been redeemed. You are henceforth free as the mountain winds. Why should we, on this day of congratulation and joy, turn our view upon the origin of slavery? But away with such thoughts as these; we will rejoice, though sobs interrupt the songs of our rejoicing, and tears mingle in the cup we pledge to Freedom.

(p.53)

The Israelites crossed the Red Sea on dry ground, as the God himself parted the sea and allowed them to cross over to their freedom. When they crossed over into the freedom, they did so collectively, with their families and communities intact, and with great wealth (Gen. 15:13-14) provided by the

Egyptians; as African-Americans crossed the Mason-Dixon Line, as they departed from the Southern states to the North, many of them had nothing but the clothes they were wearing.

Justification of the Topic

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), as institutions, have a secure place in African-American History. The original intent of HBCUs was to provide a quality education for emancipated slaves at a time when African-American students were not, or would not be, admitted to predominately white public or private institutions (PWIs), (Gasman & Tudico, 2008). The first Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were established in the 18th and 19th centuries to provide education and skills training to emancipated slaves. HBCUs continue to play a vital role in the education of African-Americans in the U.S. For more than 150 years, these institutions of higher learning have trained leaders within the Black community, graduating the nation's African-American teachers, doctors, lawyers, scientists, and college faculty.

From a historical perspective, HBUs have been providing opportunities to students who would likely not have the opportunity to pursue a college education with little or no assistance from outside resources; in essence, HBCUs have been making their own “bricks without straw” since their inception. The goals of indoctrination and education prompted the creation of the first cohort of institutions defined as historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), which are identified by the U.S. Department of Education as degree-granting institutions established before 1964 with the principal mission of educating Black Americans. A few HBCUs existed before the start of the Civil War or grew and expanded immediately after the end of the Civil War, such as Lincoln University (1853) and Cheyney University (1837) in Pennsylvania, and Wilberforce University in Ohio (1856) (Butchart, 1980). The movement to establish colleges especially for African-Americans began with the establishment of the college department at Wilberforce University in 1856. Overall, colleges of this type expressed purpose of educating African-Americans were not established until after the

abolition of slavery when the great movement began for the education of emancipated slaves (McGinniss, 1941). Throughout most of their history, HBCUs have faced great scrutiny and overcome insurmountable obstacles. Before the end of the Civil War, there were only 28 documented Black college graduates in the United States (Thompson, p.4). With the end of the Civil War, the challenge of educating more than four-million formerly enslaved people was adopted by the federal government, through the Freedman's Bureau, and many northern church missionaries, including the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E) church, which founded Wilberforce University (Gasman & Tudico, p. 8).

Currently, HBCUs are still making the dream of obtaining a college education available to students, who like myself, were not considered college-ready after they graduated from high school. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) confer a statistically higher percentage of the Bachelor's degrees earned by African- Americans (Wilson, 2011). Although HBCUs represent only 3% of the nation's colleges and universities, they graduate nearly 20 % of African-Americans with undergraduate degrees. HBCUs confer 22 % of all bachelor degrees earned by Blacks' 24 % of all bachelor's degrees awarded to Blacks in science and engineering, and nearly 35 % of all bachelor's degrees in astronomy, biology, chemistry, mathematics, and physics. "HBCUs are doing the heavy lifting of educating Black students, especially in growth and high need disciplines. Increasing numbers of other students, who want to attain a degree in a smaller, richly diverse environment are enrolling and matriculating at HBCUs" (Vedder, 2011). HBCUs generally have small endowments, are largely tuition-dependent, and lack the technological infrastructure or experience to support distance learning courses and programs (Brown, 2004). In 2001, the UNCF's survey of its 39 member colleges disclosed that as recently as 1999, less than 50 % of UNCF faculty-owned computers, compared to 71 % nationwide. As a result of such inconvenience, at home or on campus, few of our composition instructors have taken advantage of online programs to post course

information, hold class discussions, or facilitate collaborative writing or conduct peer reviews of essays.

Over the past ten years, several HBCUs have merged, some with other HBCUs; others with predominately white state institutions, or have closed completely. Many of the remaining HBCUs, both private and public, are at risk of closing, as these institutions struggle to recover from public scandals, negative publicity, high attrition, low recruitment, dwindling endowments and alumni support, crumbling campuses, all leading to financial insolvency. The legacy of HBCUs is secure; but the future of these institutions is uncertain, as African-American students currently have many options to pursue a college education, HBCUs overall, are considered no longer relevant.

Context of Study: HBCUs and Wilberforce University

Wilberforce University, a small, private HBCU in Southwest Ohio, boasts of a rich historical heritage as one of the first private HBCUs that was founded in 1856, owned, and operated by emancipated slaves; the university did not receive assistance, in funding or support, from white missionary organizations or from the Freedman's Bureau (Gasman & Tudico, 2008). Wilberforce has a long-standing history of self-reliance and self-help, making our own "bricks without straw, as the school's motto "Suo Marte", translated into English means "By one's own toil, effort, and courage." The founders of our university had the courage to establish what some called "a beacon of light" that shone in one of the darkest periods of American history. The university was born out of adversity, before the end of the Civil War and before the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. Bishop Daniel Payne, the university's second president, founding partner, and historian, was referenced by Bishop Daniel Smith in his biography and history of the university (1881), proclaimed:

Our aim is to make Christian scholars, not mere book-worms, but workers, educated workers with God for man – to effect which we employ not the Classics and Mathematics only, but Science and

Philosophy also, the former for their discriminating, polishing and cultivating influences, the latter for the quickness and exactness which they impart to the cognitive faculty, and the seed thoughts which they never fail to sow in the mind. And yet we hold that the Classics and Mathematics, as Science and Philosophy, can and must be considered to human well-being by the teachings, the sentiments and the spirit of Jesus. (p.23)

Wilberforce University opened her doors as a result of the Cincinnati General Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church, the oldest organized religious conference for African-Americans, in 1854. The university was initially purchased and erected by the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1856, with Bishop Payne and three other African-American members seated as the only titled African-Americans within the Cincinnati Conference. The university was not purchased by Payne and his founding members on behalf of the A.M.E. Church, from the predominantly white Methodist Episcopal Church, until 1863. The confusion in establishment dates often arises because the A.M.E. Church founded an institution for higher learning called Union Seminary and Farm, which later merged with the white Methodist Episcopal Church's institution to create the Wilberforce University as an institution of higher learning. In 1863, the Civil War caused low enrollment, which forced the Board of Trustees to close the university, but reopened it later that year, again, by the strength, toil, and courage of the Wilberforce community. . In the history of the university, this was the only time that the campus has closed for longer than two months.

As another act of courage and self-advancement, Wilberforce University instituted a mandatory cooperative education program in 1967, which requires students to complete two internships before they are cleared to graduate. Wilberforce is one of only two four-year institutions in the nation that continues to operate a mandatory university-wide program. In 1985, AT&T donated three computer labs housed in the main academic building; the computers in the labs were updated

with refurbished computers donated by the Department of Education in 1999; the same refurbished computers currently reside in the computer labs. In 1991, the university established an evening program for adults called CLIMB (Credentials for Leadership in Management and Business). In response to many claims that HBCUs are discriminative against students who were not African-Americans, the CLIMB program, and other similar programs at private and public HBCUs, attracted a wider target for students of all races. With the addition of the CLIMB program; the focus was no longer on race alone; it was on education of all races, providing all students with an opportunity to earn a college degree that was previously difficult to obtain. The Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling Program (RCP) is a graduate degree offered through the Division of Arts and Sciences that was implemented in 2004.

More relevant to my research, the First-Year Enrichment Program was implemented in 2009 to provide the full-time faculty members with hands on experience in preparing students academically both inside and outside of the classroom. This program allows students to become proficient in learning the content of the subjects (Math, Science, and English) while applying the skills they learn in those classes to ensure a smooth transition from high school to their first year of college, then continue the transition into their sophomore year.

Project Description

The purpose of this Participatory Action Research (PAR) study was to explore the best practices of first-year writing instructors for teaching writing using OWI methods, which include emphasizing New Literacy Skills. Specifically, this study examined what Wilberforce University community of scholars, as well as other first-year instructors at other small, private HBCUs, perceives to be the best practices for teaching writing online. This small-scale research study, using Participatory Action Research (PAR) methods, focuses on teaching and assessing New Literacy Skills, including digital and critical literacy skills, initially in two sections of first-year writing

courses, for which I was the instructor in 2010, asking students to complete three surveys throughout the semester, and using free, open-source software, such as Blogger, a free blogging website, GoogleDocs, a free document-sharing service; both Blogger and GoogleDocs are provided by Google, and Engrade, a free online grade book, as pedagogical tools to establish a “low bridge” approach to teach and assess digital and critical literacy skills (Anderson, 2008,).

This PAR study is broken into three phases: Phase 1 is the pilot study conducted from August – November, 2010; Phase 2 is the continuation, collecting survey responses from two other first-year writing classes, and other first-year writing faculty members at other small, private colleges from August – November, 2011; Phase 3 is the conclusion of the study, which includes sharing the findings and recommendations from Phases 1 and 2 with my colleagues who teach in the First-Year Program and Writing Program at Wilberforce University in August, 2012. Phase 3 includes sharing responses and recommendations, received from both students at Wilberforce as well as the faculty recommendations at Spring Faculty Institute at Wilberforce; document responses/ recommendations, and submit proposal to teach a hybrid first-year writing class in the fall of 2012. Currently, Wilberforce University operates on a two semester schedule, Fall and Spring, and only holds classes for the CLIMB program, the university’s adult degree completion program, during the summer months. From the first week in May until the first week in August, the campus does not offer or hold any classes on the campus, and the administrative offices are closed for most of the summer, which makes the online format appropriate to provide classes for students during the summer session.

Wilberforce University has converted a small number of traditional classrooms into “SMART Classrooms”, equipped with an instructor’s computer at a podium in front of the class, or are capable of being equipped for an instructor with a mobile computer/projector cart, but not computers for students to use. In her groundbreaking article recounting her experiences at Howard University, a public HBCU, Redd (2003, p.361) laments, “the SMART classrooms (along with classrooms in some of the professional schools) are virtually the only classrooms that boast any sort of Internet

connections, and they are almost impossible to obtain because they are in short supply and in high demand by faculty members in other departments.” The shortage of wired classrooms is typical at HBCUs. The HBCU Technology Assessment Study, conducted by the National Association for Equal Opportunity (NAFEO), revealed that HBCUs were more likely to update wiring in their administration, lab, and library buildings than in classrooms (NAFEO, 2000; qtd in Redd, 2003, pg. 362). Most of the classrooms at Wilberforce University lack any technology beyond a chalkboard or transparency projector; several of the instructors have purchased their own mobile SMART classrooms; they carry their personal laptops and projectors to each class, essentially, “making their bricks with their own straw,” as Pharaoh told Moses that the children of Israel must while they were captive in Egypt.

Problem Statements

Over the course of the four years that I worked at Wilberforce University, as a faculty member, I noticed several recurring problems that affected my students throughout the semester. These were chronic problems that manifested each semester. Students at Wilberforce have limited access to public computers on campus, as the computer labs are only open until 8:00 PM during the week and 12:00 PM on Saturdays; the library, which provides access to approximately ten public computers, closes at 8:00 PM on Monday and Tuesday, at 6:00 PM, Wednesday to Friday, and 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM on Saturdays.

Although Wilberforce University has wireless Internet connections (Wi-Fi) available in many of the academic buildings, however, most of the dorms are not Wi-Fi-enabled, and the inconsistent strength of the Wi-Fi signal makes access spotty at best. In 2011, Educause researchers, Dahlstrom, de Boor, Grunwald, and Vockley, conducted a national study surveying 3,000 undergraduate students on their use of technology (Dahlstrom et al, 2011). Students who were surveyed indicated that “open spaces on campus are the least well covered by Wi-Fi, with only 27 % offering “robust” coverage.

Campus provisioning of Wi-Fi is important, since 78 % of students who use Wi-Fi, or whose instructors use Wi-Fi, say that Wi-Fi is “extremely valuable” to their academic success (Dahlström, et al, 2011, p. 7-9). The campus of Wilberforce University is expansive, spanning nearly 50 acres of land; however, most of the campus comprises of open space, with only about ten buildings.

For those students who have their own laptops, Wi-Fi access in the dorms is inconsistent with a weak signal, because the signal emanates from the IT Center in the Administration building, which is nearly a mile away from the dorms. The IT Center is closed when the Administration building closes at 4:30 in the afternoon, and the computer labs close by 8:00 pm making it difficult for students to access Internet resources from the dorms after the computer lab is closed. The availability of Wi-Fi Internet access is useful if students own their own computers, if they are willing to cope with inconsistent access; however, many students do not own computers, which forces students to wait for the limited computers in the computer lab and library. Multi-tasking is a common practice for many college students. When I visit the computer labs, I frequently see students with have multiple browser windows open, performing multiple-tasks at once; updating their status or profiles, or chatting and responding to their friends on Facebook, streaming music from Pandora, iTunes, or other streaming music sources, playing videos on Youtube.com, chatting with their friends, researching articles or searching for sources on Google, and checking and updating their bids as they shop on eBay, all while they are sitting in an often-crowded computer lab, with their cell phones next to the monitor, sending and responding to text messaging, oftentimes during class time, when during my class lesson or when they are supposed to be writing or revising their writing, or performing a peer review on their classmates' essays. With limited hours in the computer lab and library, working students find it nearly impossible to use campus computers because of their work schedules.

Students who enroll late, or are admitted to the class late, are often too far behind to catch up with the rest of the class, particularly when the only interaction they have with me and their

classmates is during the scheduled class time. When students enroll late, or show up to class after the second week, they often do not have hard-copy books; if they are able to obtain books, they may not have them until late in the semester, preventing students from fully participating in the class. Learning and demonstrating proficiency with 21st century skills, including New Literacy skills, are course-level outcomes and program outcomes for the first-year program at Wilberforce University; it will be challenging to teach and assess those skills when neither we, as faculty, nor the students have access or proficiency with the standard tools and technologies associated with those skills.

Several students enrolled in the class would not show up until the second-fourth week of the classes. By that time, their first writing assignment was due, as I normally require students to submit their first draft of their first essay within the first two weeks of class; if students enroll late, switch sections, or are not admitted to class until this late, due to financial aid or other administrative issues, the students start off the class at a deficit, making it difficult for them to catch up with the rest of the class. This was especially true when I paired students into writing groups, so they would have consistent readers for their peer reviews. Second, I noticed that students did not have their textbooks until late in the semester; oftentimes, they would go through most of the class without a book, because their books were too expensive, the late funding of the book vouchers, slow funding to financial aid awards, or other administrative issues with the bookstore. The campus lost our physical bookstore in 2009 because the university was not able to pay the book vendors in advance and was not able to maintain the books and other merchandise in the bookstore.

When faculty placed book orders, it was just an estimate; the revised book order process required faculty to order the books from an online book vendor during the previous semester, and students would “pre-order” their books from the online bookseller as well. At the beginning of the new semester, the bookstore would debit their financial aid for the amount of books when they picked them up from library. The problem, however, was that the books that students pre-ordered never arrived in the library at the start of the semester, because the bookstore staff was not able to order

books until the start of the new semester, because that was when financial aid was available and confirmed. In short, I spent the first several weeks of each semester teaching classes with no textbooks. Finally, I noticed that students would attend classes less frequently after Week 8, and would simply stop attending by Week 10. These students are at-risk of failing not only my class, but risk losing financial aid due to non-attendance. Again, 98% of all students who attend Wilberforce are able to do so because of financial aid; if enough students are withdrawn for non-attendance, the university as whole faces grave financial duress and eminent closure. Students have various reasons for the “stopping-out”, as some refer to the practice; many of their reasons are related to their families that they have left in their home states; of the students that I surveyed in the representative sample, 40% of the students identified themselves as “first-generation” college students.

Research Questions

Based on my experiences teaching at Wilberforce University, I devised the following research questions:

1. What do instructors and students within the small, private HBCU perceive to be best practices to teach and assess New Literacy Skills in an Online Writing Instruction environment?
2. Are instructors at small, private HBCUs teaching New Literacy Skills as a required course outcome for their first-year writing courses, or are these instructors teaching these skills as part of their personal pedagogy? How did these instructors prepare to teach these classes in OWI? How has teaching New Literacy Skills affected the instructor’s pedagogy?

3. What tools and technologies are instructors at small, private HBCUs using to teach New Literacy skills? Are these tools primarily proprietary, open-source, or a combination of open-source and proprietary tools?

Limitations of the Research Design

I recognized that the research design of this study includes several limitations. One limitation in this research study is the sample size. Although all student participants in Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the study were adult learners and full-time students at a small, private HBCU, the small number of student participants and instructors, both within the university and at other similar small, private HBCUs participating in this study does not present a full representative sampling of students and writing faculty in HBCUs and other Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). The limited number of collective responses to the survey and interview questions limits the findings concerning the issues confronting students and instructors within the small, private HBCU such as their previous educational experiences and technological skill levels and their perceptions of the hybrid English 111 and online ENGL 112, Composition I and Composition II, course design, pedagogy, student interactions, and time commitments. Additionally, the limited number of collective adult learners' responses limits the findings concerning their reflections of online learning in general and in the hybrid English 111: Composition I and ENGL 112: Composition II courses.

The results of this study may not be generalized beyond the specific population from which the sample was drawn, due to the unique sample available for this study. The focus of this research was delimited specifically to Wilberforce University; none of the classes that were observed or included in the study were conducted wholly online, as Wilberforce did not offer any online writing courses at the time of the study. The focus of this study was further delimited to faculty members who have already taught writing online and were currently using online technologies to teach their ground classes. The responses were self-reported by the students and faculty who participated in the study;

the study relied on participants to report truthfully and accurately. My personal, although unintentional, bias as the researcher, may influence the study, particularly for the student responses from the pilot study, as I was both the researcher as well as the students' instructor. My prior learning experiences as an adult learner, with my observations of the online English 111 and 112 hybrid composition course and perceptions of the course design and instructional methods, as well as my collection of survey data from other instructors at similar institutions (small, private HBCUs), reflect my subjectivity in this research study. The limited number of collective responses to the survey and interview questions limits the findings concerning the issues confronting minority students at a small, private HBCU, such as their previous educational experiences and technological skill levels and their perceptions of the hybrid ENGL 111 and ENGL 112, Composition I and Composition II course design, pedagogy, student interactions, and time commitments.

Assumptions

As the researcher for this study, as well as my perspective as a participant within the community of scholars at Wilberforce University, I have several assumptions. I assume that other first-year writing instructors, at small, private HBCUs, teaching New Literacy Skills in their Composition classes, but are not teaching them in a widespread manner, or teaching those skills are part of their personal pedagogy, not as a requirement from the university. Some instructors at other small, private HBCUs are teaching New Literacy Skills in their first-year writing course, but are not teaching specific New Literacy Skills, as described by Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu (2008), 21st Century Literacies, Internet Literacies, Information Communication Technologies (ICT) Literacies, Digital Literacies, New Media Literacies, Multiliteracies, Information literacy, Computer Literacy.

I also assume that if these instructors are teaching New Literacy Skills, they are likely not labeling those skills by their specific monikers, as described in the literature review, or they are teaching and assessing a combination of skills under the New Literacies umbrella. I also assume that New Literacy Skills are not required course outcomes for their first-year writing courses because the

instructors are teaching those skills are part of their personal pedagogy. First-year writing instructors teaching and assessing New Literacy skills, particularly if and when they have limited access to digital technology and proprietary tools.

In addition, I assume that these instructors, at other small, private HBCUs, are probably teaching New Literacy Skills using technology-enhanced traditional course delivery, marginally incorporating some components of OWI in a hybrid format. Regarding tools to teach these New Literacy Skills, I assume that many instructors are using open-source or homegrown products, because the schools do not have a substantial technology budget to purchase software licenses, or instructors are paying for the technology themselves, out of their own pockets, instead of relying on their campuses technology budget. I assume that other first-year writing teachers are teaching New Literacy Skills to students with low levels of alphabetic, technical, and critical literacy skills by using scaffolding methods; building on the tools, skills, and technologies that students are already comfortable using, then slowly introducing new technology and skills, and building on the skills those students already possess.

I assume that incorporating appropriate technology, when applied effectively to pedagogy, provides students with easy access to resources and helps them reduce the burden of administrative tasks, such as printing assignments, checking grades, registering for classes, paying tuition, tracking academic progress. In addition, I assume that incorporating appropriate technology into pedagogy, will allow students to feel connected to the academic community, and make students' learning a more immersive, engaging, and relevant experience (Dahlstrom, et al., 2011).

My final assumption, and hope, is that successfully implementing and offering online and hybrid courses will assist Wilberforce University, and other small, private college, to leverage financial constraints that are caused by low enrollment and retention. Within the past 10 years, there has been a dramatic upsurge of interest in online programs among HBCUs and other small, private colleges and universities, who consider online classes and programs cost-effective options that can help them lower their tuition, reduce financial gaps caused by low enrollment, retention, and fundraising, and

provide a profitable source of consistent revenue for the institution. This paradigm shift in higher education, from making higher education accessible to making it both available and cost-effective, was stimulated by the widely publicized, recession-resistant profits of the several successful corporate, for-profit institutions, whose enrollments range from one third to 100 percent online (e. g., Capella University, Kaplan College, University of Phoenix, and Strayer University). I should also note that several of those for-profit institutions have established local campuses within 20 miles of Wilberforce University, where students may take all or part of their classes online. These for-profit institutions are becoming direct competitors for our students.

In a similar vein, I assume that the online revenue and high-profit aspirations of non-profit institutions were also encouraged by surging increases in online enrollments, such as an increase of 21% in online enrollments between the fall 2008 and fall 2009 semesters according to the latest Sloan Consortium survey (Allen & Seaman, 2010). There are as many examples of successful, well-intended for-profit and non-profit institutions that have avoided spectacular, public failures of the promising for-profit ventures launched by Columbia University (“Fathom”), New York University (“NYUonline”), the Yale/Oxford/Stanford (“AllLearn”) partnership, Temple University (“Virtual Temple”), and the University of Maryland University College (“UMUC Online”).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term “Literacy” as related to Composition Studies, has taken on a broad range of definitions relative to the culture of the first-year writing class. For this study, I will discuss students’ literacies in two primary categories: academic and professional literacies, that students use in the academic writing (in-school) or in the workplace, and social literacies (out-of-school) that students use in their personal writing/communications (social networking/ communications).

Literacy

There are too many descriptions and definitions of “Literacy,” especially as they relate to writing in post-secondary academic contexts. Drawing on a number of definitions from literacy scholars in Composition and Technical Communication (Street, 1984; Brandt, 1995; Selfe, 1999; Cargile Cook, 2002; Selber, 2004), the focus of literacy for this study includes the move from basic alphabetic or prose literacy, simply reading and writing texts, to applying New Literacy Skills to students’ reading and writing in digital contexts. As most definitions indicate, literacy focuses on reading and writing critically, as well as rhetorically, in some cases. To be considerate literate, it is simply not enough to read the words and understand them, but to understand them in a critical manner, or be able to analyze and synthesize the meanings conveyed by the text.

The International Reading Association (2009) reported that for students to be considered literate, they must “become proficient in the new literacies of 21st-century technologies. As a result, literacy educators have a responsibility to effectively integrate these new technologies into the curriculum; preparing students for the literacy future they deserve (International Reading Association, 2009) I agree with all of these definitions, to a degree; however, for my own pedagogy, I subscribe to Dr. Stephen Marcus’ definition of literacy as “knowing where the truth lies” (Pope & Golub, 2000). Marcus deliberately infers two meanings with his definition: first, to be considered literate, one must develop pertinent reading skills to empower himself to search for and identify sources of “honest, straightforward, truthful information.” To be sufficiently literate, one must also be able to identify and accurately analyze those electronic texts that misrepresent the truth.

Regarding literacy, students have historically needed strong reading skills to accurately analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information; however, with the integration of the Internet and electronic texts into so many aspects of our lives, these skills have become critical tools for the literate person" (Golub, 1999, p. 53-54). In addition, I rely on Knoblauch’s definitions of literacy as he described them in his article “*Literacy and the Politics of Education*” (1990); Knoblauch discusses four categories of literacy in his article: functional literacy, cultural literacy, literacy for personal growth, and critical literacy (79-80). One of the issues that I was most interested in is how the students defined “Literacy.” I asked this question of respondents repeatedly throughout the study, and the results and responses from the respondents, both students and instructors, revealed that we, as an academic community and discipline, have yet to agree upon and support an authoritative definition of “literacy.”

In Composition classes, we should focus on what students can do when they arrive, rather than working from what a potentially arbitrary placement exam says they cannot do, then build on that knowledge and help students develop strategies to analyze and meet new expectations (WPA

2007; National Council of Teachers of English, 2004; Haswell 1988; Royer and Gilles 1998; Huot 2002). Knoblauch describes “functional literacy,” as the skills that are needed for everyday uses of reading and writing to function independently, such as reading bus schedules and writing checks; “cultural literacy,” he says, includes reading and writing texts, such as literary studies, used by societies to transmit their values; “literacy for personal growth,” often found in expressive writing, personalized reading, and whole-language programs. Finally, critical literacy relies upon an “agenda identifying reading and writing abilities with a critical consciousness of the social conditions in which people find themselves, recognizing the extent to which language practices objectify and rationalize these conditions”(79). Knoblauch’s categories of literacies are not always distinct from one another, and they do not always fit neatly into common or modern definitions of these literacies; however, they are useful and appropriate for this study. I am not so bold as to profess that there is a singular, authoritative definition of “Literacy,” even within the context of First-Year Composition.

While alphabetic literacy, related to print-text-centered literacy is still important, focusing on print-based literacy alone subjugates other equally critical kinds of communications that our students need to be sufficiently literate in the 21st century (21st Century Schools, 2010; NCTE, 2010). First-year writing instructors are left in a position where many important doors are closed to us or at least made extremely difficult to open in terms of using different kinds of technology, both in order to critique it and also to use it to compose, because such activities/technologies are not considered to be normally related to or essential components of writing classes and are therefore not supported conceptually or in terms of hardware requirements. A lack of integration of pedagogy related to technology and writing in teacher training creates a self-reinforcing circle in which we may “know” the role computers play in our literacy initiatives in freshman English, but are unequipped to effectively apply the literacy skills in which we are charged with teaching; in essence, the they are forced to continue to make the “bricks” or teaching these critical skills to

students without the “straw,” the tools and technologies that they need effectively teach them. If the overall crux of literacy focuses on effective, proficient communication, and communication, and is in many ways directly connected to technology, as a common mode of communication through text messages, cell phone calls, emails, social networking, then proficiency with applying communication with the written word should concern understanding of technical requirements in addition to the grammatical rules for communicating through writing. We still must maintain awareness of the technologies most commonly used to communicate to be considered acceptably literate.

Modern Literacy/New Literacies

I use this term, “modern literacy” to be inclusive of the means through which our students are expected to communicate; I do not use the term to denigrate other definitions of literacy, or suggest that traditional literacy is somewhat primitive literacy. My intent, is not to suggest that those who do not possess or demonstrate a proficient understanding of Modern Literacy or New Literacy are incapable of functioning as productive members of our society; however, I firmly believe that most definitions of Literacy rely on the context in which the literacy is used, therefore, as an academic instructor, it is my responsibility to teach students to demonstrate academic literacy in my context of the university. When our communication is mediated electronically, our technical abilities in the mediums we work within affect the delivery and reception of our message, or what we intent to say and how we intended to say it. If we are unfamiliar, and therefore unskilled, with using a particular medium, for example, we are unable to create a graph or insert an image in a PowerPoint presentation, our intended communication can suffer.

I refer to the blending of traditional print-text skills, or traditional print-based literacy skills combined with modern multi-modal facilities as “modern literacy.” I rely on Miles Myers, who uses several terms to describe this standard of literacy. Myers describes a current standard literacy as “translation/ critical literacy,” which is similar but not inclusive of the kind of literacy that Myers describes, which fosters “higher-order thinking skills” (p.109), with Freirean critical literacy that uses language and critical-thinking skills as a means to examine fundamental power relationships. In other words, critical literacy aspires to urge students to action; Myers’ translation/critical literacy do not always require students to take action, but describes the writing and reading that is taught, necessary, and highly valued in academic contexts, as the foundation for academic literacy, especially in post-secondary, college-level writing.

Academic literacy is usually defined as the kind of reading proficiency required to construct the meaning of content-area texts and literature encountered in school. It also encompasses the kind of reading proficiencies typically assessed on state-level accountability measures, such as the ability to make inferences from text, to learn new vocabulary from context, to link ideas across texts, and to identify and summarize the most important ideas or content within a text. The definition of academic literacy includes more than simply the ability to read a text to gain a surface understanding of the content, but includes the ability to think about its meaning so that students are able to wrestle with and resolve questions require student to make inferences or draw conclusions that are beyond the scope of the text.

The common definition of academic literacy also includes the ability to learn from text, in the sense that full comprehension of text meaning usually results in new understandings or new applications of academic learning. A succinct definition of academic literacy is needed that will embrace the cultural values, self-awareness and critical consciousness of the students, giving them —a cultural frame which will aid them in understanding the material presented during instruction (Freire,[1970] 2004; Ferdman, 1990; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2000). In

demonstrating an appropriate level of academic literacy, students should be able to demonstrate their deeper understanding of text by developing and delivering a well-developed, polished response to complex questions about the texts' content and meaning read (NAEP, p. 18). Even technically sound instructional techniques are unlikely to succeed unless we can ensure that, most of the time, students are engaged and motivated to understand what they read (NAEP, p. 19).

Myers, in his book *Changing Our Minds: Negotiating English and Literacy*, traces the development of literacy standards, and thus literacy instruction, in the United States under the premise that standards change due to a diverse array of concerns, and instruction must then change to meet those new standards. Myers suggests that "changes in standards of literacy are explained by (and associated with) occupational shifts, ideological shifts, national debate, and changes in the nation's form of schooling, models of mind, and literacy assessment" (p.16).

Myers describes the shift in the focus of literacy, that occurred at some point between 1960—1983, educators and policy makers began to realize that decoding/analytic literacy was not meeting the "new demands of contemporary economic problems and the workplace, the new demands of pluralism and diversity in our society, and the new demands for new supports for personal growth" (p.117).

Myers describes a new standard for mass literacy emerged, designed to help students "learn how to work in teams, how to learn, how to problem solve, and how to use an increasing range of tools" (p.112), and labels this new form of literacy "translation/critical literacy," which is what I consider to be academic and workplace literacy today. Throughout his book, Myers provides evidence to show that as each form of literacy gained dominance, schools managed to meet those standards. As Myers notes, the problem is that schools develop effective curricula after the fact, that is, once a form of literacy has clearly gained domination. Therefore "literacy crises" occur when a new standard of literacy standard is being defined and negotiated. Myers' concerns with how economic change affects literacy instruction are discussed in further detail in Brandt's

Literacy in American Lives (2001). Brandt discusses literacy using three basic concepts of literacy in her study: literacy as a skill is a resource, used for economic, political, intellectual, and spiritual purposes (p.5); literacy is promoted/directed by literacy sponsors, which are “any agents who enable, support, teach, and model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold, literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way” (p.19); and literacy is collection of which we accumulate artifacts from previous literacy events throughout our learning lives (Brandt, 2001, p.104). Brandt notes, in the context of her study that *literacy learning* refers to the “specific occasions when people take on new understandings or capacities; it is not confined to school settings or formal study. To consider literacy as a resource, Brandt argues, considers that literacy “takes its shape from what can be traded on it (7) helps us understand why people go to such extraordinary lengths to secure literacy for themselves and their children, particularly in our current knowledge- and- information-based economy. Brandt’s rationale is that a more literate person will have more and better opportunities than one who is less literate. The third concept in Brandt’s book that holds particular significance for this study is her notion of “accumulations of literacy.”

Borrowing from Myers’ chronology of mass-literacy development, Brandt sees previous literacy practices inextricably intertwined in present literacy values, which will then be revisited in future literacy practices. As Brandt explains, the “complicated amalgamations of literacy’s past, present and future formulate the interpretive puzzle faced by current generations of literacy learners” (Brandt,2001, p. 104). Academic writing, from Miller’s perspective in *Writing at the End of the World* (2005), can only matter if writers use writing as a way to make sense of their “irrational experience,” in the world in which they live. However, another agenda, particularly interesting for me, appears later in the book, in a chapter entitled “The Arts of Complicity.” Here Miller promotes a practical pedagogy, easily applicable writing courses delivered in nearly any method, which promotes (1) ways for students to acquire a fluency in the ways that the

bureaucratic systems that regulate our lives use words; (2) a familiarity with the logics, styles of argumentation, and repositories of evidence employed by organizational bodies; and (3) a fuller understanding of what can and cannot be gained through discursive exchanges, with a concomitant recalibration of the horizon of expectations that is delineated by our sense of what words can or cannot do when deployed in the public sphere, teaching students to “invent the university” as David Bartholomae describes in his essay *Inventing the University*. A “pragmatic pedagogy” not only resembles the “translation/critical literacy” paradigm that Myers describes, but also what Russell Durst calls “reflective instrumentalism” in his book *Collision Course: Conflict, Negotiation, and Learning in College Composition* (1999). Durst’ study examines the resistance that students exhibit against “critical literacy” pedagogies. Durst’ definition of critical literacy combines the Freirean version of critical pedagogy, concerned with promoting social justice and developing an awareness of power inequality through language, with teaching that emphasizes critical thinking that he calls “reflective instrumentalism”(p.178). This approach accepts students’ pragmatic goals, offers to help them achieve their goals, but adds a reflective dimension that, while itself useful in the work world, also helps students place their individual aspirations in the larger context necessary for critical analysis.

While almost 10% of all citizens of the country are unemployed, and almost 16 % of all African-Americans are unemployed, economic outlook reports continue to indicate that many well-paying jobs are currently unfilled due to lack of specialized skills and education, to say nothing of the lack of innovation and investment necessary to build the American economy for decades to come. In the current job market, and the careers of the future, will require a workforce that has received a globally competitive education and is prepared to lead the nation into a new era of prosperity. But, a great debate is now underway about education reform and the best way to develop the workforce and consumer base to keep America competitive and prosperous in the twenty-first century.

Composition studies are undoubtedly a multi-disciplinary area of research, in both pedagogy and practice. Modern literacy incorporates/depends on/integrates advanced technology as an advanced technology is increasingly becoming part of our daily lives. Literacy-initiatives such as our college writing classes should approach literacy as a means for developing personal agency. A critical pedagogy (one which seeks to develop individual personal agency) in a “writing” classroom should be based in approaches that utilize advanced technology as part of a “modern literacy.” Scholars from numerous disciplines including cognitive science (Mayer, 2001), sociolinguistics (Cope & Kalantzis, 2003; Gee, 2003; Kress, 2003; Lemke, 1998), cultural anthropology (Markham, 1998; Hine 2000; Miller and Slater 2000; Wakeford 1999), information science (Bilal, 2000; Hirsch, 1999), law (Lessig 2005), and rhetorical studies (Andrews and Andrews 2004; Kastman Breuch 2002; Starke-Meyerring 2005), among others, have identified changes to literacy as they explore phenomena in daily life in relation to new technologies relevant to their respective areas of study. Philosophers, literary scholars, linguists, educational theorists, and educational researchers, among others, pondered the implications of the shift from page to screen for text composition and comprehension (Bolter 1991; Heim 1987; Landow 1992). They also considered the potential for linguistic theory and literacy education (Bruce & Michaels, 1987; Reinking, 1988). Questions were raised about the extent to which new technologies altered certain fundamentals of language and literacy and, if so, in what ways and with what consequences.

On the other hand, there were those who questioned whether there was really anything “new” regarding “new literacies,” as using digital technology within literacy events, if digital technologies had simply become the latest vehicles with which to accomplish perform social and academic tasks and practices common through the centuries, including reading and writing (Cohen 1987; Cuban 1986; Hodas 1993). From their perspective, there was nothing new about new literacy; the skills did not change, but the tools have changed; we simply read and write text

on a screen instead of on paper (Coiro et al, 2007, 18-19). Scholars within New Literacy Studies have constructed a useful framework to define the “new” in New Literacies Studies related to research. Lankshear and Knobel (2003), for example, identified three ways in which new literacies may be considered new: (a) chronologically, (b) ontologically, and (c) paradigmatically. Some literacies are new because they have been newly developed (i.e., chronologically new), which includes, for example, learning how to read and navigate a website. Others are considered new because they are “new in kind,” meaning that they were simply not available before the development of certain digital technologies and services; this includes, for example, literacy practices such as blogging (Mortenson). This second perspective on the “new” in New Literacies is concerned with ontologically new literacies. Yet, other literacies can be considered “new” due to the development of a socio-cultural stance within literacy studies that now recognizes a range of social practices as being “literacies” of one kind or another. These literacies are paradigmatically new and involve, for example, scenario-planning, “zineing” and fan-fiction writing, among others (Knobel & Lankshear, 2005).

New literacy Studies (NLS) considers the context in which literacy is associated, challenging the traditional definitions of literacy at any specific time and place and challenging literacies in academic and social contexts of those who are dominant and who are marginalized or resistant. Within the context of Composition, the broad scope of New Literacies includes: digital literacy, computer literacy, Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), critical literacy, 21st Century Literacies, new media literacies, information literacy, and Internet literacy, all under the “New Literacies” umbrella:,”

The new literacies of the Internet and other ICTs include the skills, strategies, and dispositions necessary to successfully use and adapt to the rapidly changing information and communication technologies and contexts that continuously

emerge in our world and influence all areas of our personal and professional lives. These new literacies allow us to use the Internet and other ICTs to identify important questions, locate information, critically evaluate the usefulness of that information, synthesize information to answer those questions, and then communicate the answers to others. (Leu, et al, 2008, p. 10)

Examples of new literacies include using a search engine effectively to locate information, evaluating the accuracy and utility of information that is located on a webpage in relation to one's purpose, using a word processor effectively, including using functions such as checking spelling accuracy, inserting graphics, and formatting text, participating effectively in bulletin board or listserv discussions to get needed information, knowing how to use e-mail to communicate effectively; and inferring correctly the information that may be found at a hyperlink on a webpage (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, and Cammack, 2004).

New literacy practices can be accurately described as “deictic literacies” (Wilber, 2008, referencing Leu’s concept of “deictic literacies”) to explain the increased use of the term “new” itself, to describe literacy, and its employment as a concept that marks off one set of literacy practices and understands from another. *Deixis* is a linguistic term used to categorize those words such as *today*, *tomorrow*, *here*, and *there* that take their meaning directly from the context in which they are used. Therefore, what means to say “today” at any given time is specific to that particular point in time. Literacy practices, then, are deictic in that they change in relations to the tools and contexts in which they are practiced (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004, p. 1592). Therefore, the addition of new tools in the forms of digital technologies means a change in existing literacy practices when seen from a particular point of time. New Literacies—as both a concept and a practice—are thoroughly deicic in that they depend for their meaning on new

developments that inform and shape them. Arguably, current “new” literacies will no longer be “new” when a new set of tools and use contexts appear. The intersection of a deictic stance on new literacies and Lankshear and Knobel’s concept (2003) of ontologically new literacies, in particular, provide a useful theoretical framework for examining studies of college students’ new literacy and digital technology practices as well as studies bounded by college contexts and purpose.

This theoretical orientation toward new literacies provides insight into ways of bridging the in-school and out-of-school literacy practices of college students, in particular, shedding important light on the student as a “user” and obtaining an emic perspective on literacy and technology developments that could prove to be important resources for higher education, particularly for students as “users” who need to learn to apply the principles of New Literacy Skills, who may have limited experience refining those skills, or applying the skills in practical, useful ways, such as in the context of their workplace. Being able to access the technology of the modern age considers more than students’ ability to lay their hands on technologies; it also considers how those with the access are able to effectively use the technology in question to perform a range of tasks; requires more than simply access, but proficiency and application of those skills and technologies to perform those tasks (Powell, 2007), (Grabill, 2003). New Literacy Studies represents a new tradition considering the nature of literacy, which focuses beyond how literacy skills are acquired, as in dominant, traditional approaches to literacy, but focuses more on considering literacy as a social practice (Street, 1984; Gee, 1996; Haas, 1996; Gilster, 1999; Dufflemeyer, 2000; Kress, 2003). Considering literacy as a social practice considers and recognizes multiliteracies that fluctuate based on the time and space in which the literacies are used (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Dunn, 2001; Selber, 2004; Yancey, 2009) and challenges traditional concepts of literacy in relation to power (Dufflemeyer, 2002; Selfe & Hawisher, 2004; Anderson, 2008; Carpenter, 2009).

Potentially of the greatest concern for modern educators, is the fact that underneath the surface excitement of the technological sophistication of “millennials” sits a growing body of evidence that millions of students, especially black and brown, under perform academically relative to their counterparts both in the U.S. and globally. In terms of these uses, students often layer tools and practices. When studying, a college-age student may be listening to digital music, surfing the Internet, either for research or personal interest (or both), updating a weblog, chatting with friends using a chat or instant-messaging program, participating in an interest-driven discussion forum, using a word-processing program to write an assigned paper and reading/responding to email messages (National Urban League, 2006; Cammack, 2005).

Although students are capable of sending rapid-fire text messages while updating their Facebook profile, their ability to complete these tasks does not necessarily indicate that they are capable of drafting a cogent client proposal or clearly presenting complicated financial projections to potential investors. The recently acclaimed documentary, *Waiting for Superman*, references this anecdote; American students believe that they are top performers around the world. Instead, the most recent Program for International Student Assessment numbers show American students as ranking 14 for reading, 17 for science, and 25 for math among 34 participating nations (Amario, 2010). American youth are challenged with increased competitiveness as a growing number of nations seek to increase global market share in the technology-based economy. Despite the suffering and devastation that I have seen within my community and in this nation as whole, from massive layoffs, high unemployment and a housing market recession, I remain hopeful and committed—secure in my belief that everyone is entitled to receive a high-quality education to provide greater options for better quality of life. According to the Census Bureau, a person with a high school diploma can expect to earn approximately \$26,000 annually compared with just \$19,000 for a high school drop-out. Over a lifetime, a person with a college degree can expect to earn \$1.3 million more than a high school graduate.

Brian Street (1993) described New Literacy Studies as literacies that are implicated in “power relations and embedded in specific cultural meanings and practices.” From this perspective, the relationship between written and oral language differs according to context; there is not just one universal account of “the oral” or “the written” (or “the Discourse/discourse) (Street, 1995). Brian Street argues that social literacies seek “to understand literacy in terms of concrete social practices and to theorize it in terms of the ideologies in which the literacies are embedded” (95). To that end, Street catalogues the work of several scholars, such as Michael Clanchy, Harvey Graff, and John Parry as examples of research into how cultures adapted to and used literacy in relation to ideological and social interests. Many researchers investigating the cognitive consequences of literacy (Goody, 1987; Olson, Torrence and Hildyard, 1985), recognize that what is often attributed to literacy, or lack of it, is often a consequence of the social conditions in which literacy is taught. Literacy needs to be distinguished from education in terms of perceived consequences and benefits (Street, 1995).

Regarding New Literacy Studies, Brian Street (1988), disputes the myth of an “autonomous” model of literacy. He argues that “literacy is a neutral technology which cultures develop as they advance. One of the effects of this “neutral” technology, though, is that those who are considered as literate develop more advanced skills in logic and abstraction, and their communication becomes less dependent upon context. Street posits that the autonomous model is flawed because it assumes that it is entirely possible for a technological tool can truly be neutral and independent of ideology. Thus literacy, as another form of technology, is also neutral. This neutral or autonomous model of literacy is most clearly seen, Street demonstrates, through the studies of scholars such as Angela Hilyard, David Olson, Patricia Greenfield, and Jack Goody. These scholars concluded that oral societies are not as advanced in logic, abstract thinking, and context-independent communication. However, subsequent studies, especially Michael Coles and Sylvia Scribner’s study, showed that people in oral societies are just as capable of logical, abstract

thinking as those in literate societies. Street describes the “ideological” model of literacy, as one that examines literacy as it works within specific social, cultural, historical, and economic contexts.

Giddens (1991) cites a typical exponent of the autonomous model, Walter Ong, in linking studies of speaking and writing to his accounts of modernity. Ong, he notes, believes that ‘oral cultures have a heavy investment in the past, which registers in their highly conservative institutions and in their verbal performances and poetic processes, which are formulaic, relatively invariable, calculated to preserve the hard-won knowledge garnered out of past experience which, since there is no writing to record it, would otherwise slip away’ (Ong, 1977 cited in Giddens, 1991, p. 24). Street insists “that the claims we have been examining concerning the consequences of literacy are ‘ideological.’ They derive from the writers’ own work practice and belief system and serve to reinforce it in relation to other groups and cultures” (Street, 1988, p.39).

In terms of perceptions of technology, according to a study of 25 students at the Pennsylvania State University, most participants considered Web browsing, instant messaging, and the Internet to be “neutral” rather than specific technologies in their own right (Roberts, 2005). Students who participated in the study did not view these technologies as distinct, in the same way as they considered other forms of common technology, such as telephones and televisions; these technologies were simply elements of the “online mix” these students used in their everyday lives. The study involved only a small sample of students; but it was still a valid indicator of more widespread implications and dispositions. Overwhelmingly, research on college-age students within the United States suggest that most students own or have access to a cellular telephone, a digital music player, digital cable televisions, perhaps with broadband Internet connection, a video-game player, and a range of other technologies such as a computer, an external, portable data-storage device, digital camera, and so on, which students use for a wide variety of purposes (Jones, 2006). Computer ownership is significant, according to Hawkins,

Rudy, & Nicholich (2005, p.12), as students who do not own computers, or have easy access to a computer, spend less time interacting with the technology and have lower digital literacy skills. As Bruce (1993) argued, as an academic body, we must acknowledge the impact that technology has on the relationship between the tools that we use and the people who use those tools, oftentimes, in their daily lives (p. 15).

Our academic culture, in which we function as Composition instructors and scholars, includes the technologies that mediate these symbol systems and the ideologies that drive the uses of these symbolic systems for specific purposes, particularly in the context of the first-year writing courses, regarding New Literacy Skills. Composition classes at Wilberforce University rarely utilize technology (web-cameras, projectors, recorders, for example) to compose in digital mediums. Instructors often lack training, and are not used to thinking about the composition process for incorporating technology into their writing classes. The training should be long enough so that faculty can be encouraged to develop a skeleton of a course or even one lesson that other participants can critique. The facilitator of the training should model good techniques for building a learning community with the course and for empowering the participating faculty to explore both the medium and the material (Palloff & Pratt *Beyond*, 375). Palloff and Pratt's description of an ideal training course for educators is viable; however, it lacks the element of composition and possibly adult learning.

This recommendation for the educational preparation of instructors for online writing courses for adult learners builds on Palloff and Pratt's training design. Bates (2005) "resists the post modernist tendency to believe that everything new is good and that there are no lessons to be learned from the past" (ix) as he assesses the positives and negatives of technology in learning. Bates (2005) advocates for new teaching strategies; he concludes, that "technology provides an opportunity to teach differently, in a way that can meet fundamental needs of a new and rapidly changing society. This requires though new approaches to teaching and learning that exploit the

unique features of different technologies in order to meet the widely different needs of many types of learners” (225). Although he did not specifically mention specific types of technology, Bates states that the use of different technologies should be based on an understanding of “how people learn” and “how to design effective learning environments” based on the different technologies’ “educational strengths and limitations” (225).

What is missing from most of our classrooms here at Wilberforce University, though, is the technology that the vast majority of our students (and we) use to compose, and one that affects the nature of the writing process, computers. Writing with networked computers changes the contexts for writing in a number of ways. For instance, the changed contexts for writing often must be understood in terms of power and identity. Composition theorists have attended to issues of agency and subjectivity in regard to digital media and online spaces; Knadler (2001), Redd (2003), Taylor (1997), and others have addressed issues of race and difference in digital spaces, both from an instructor’s standpoint and from students’ perspectives.

Although there have been many articles and texts published that focus on new literacy studies, there have been few texts published in Composition Studies that concern those students whose literacies have been marginalized, such as minority students, particularly their contexts as they have been marginalized in a dominant academic culture, as indicated by Gilyard (1991, 1996, 1999), Gilyard & Richardson (2001), particularly as these multiliteracies relate to writing and technology with minority Composition students (Balester, 1993; Delpit, 2004; Monroe, 2004; Lunsford & Ouzgane, Lahoucine, 2004; Banks, 2005), with even fewer texts that relate to a minority-centered classroom at an HBCU (Redd, 2003, 2006; Kynard, 2007; Kynard & Eddy, 2009).

The HBCU provides a “unique student-teacher relationship and teaching methodology” in which the “teaching methodology... embraces cooperative learning by doing in an accepting classroom setting” (Roebuck & Komnduri, 1993). Several scholars, including the often-quoted Tinto (1999), conclude that a student’s academic performance and likelihood to persist throughout their degree program is indicated by their performance during their first year of college; if students can successfully complete their first year, they are more likely to persist through graduation. According to Tinto (1990), effective retention programs share three principles: the principles of community, commitment to students, and commitment to education (quoted in Young & Bruce, 2011). These principles are the guiding principles and factors for the HBCU, overall, and hallmarks of small, private HBCUs, such as Wilberforce University. Griffin & Jomm (2008) presented several case studies concerning the “Freshman Seminar” from a broad range of schools that offer the Freshman Seminar, as Wilberforce requires students to complete the Freshman Seminar, to assist students in making a successful transition from high school to college. Of the 22 case studies presented in the most current version of this publication, the publication did not include a single case study from a public or private HBCU, which are often tasked with teaching students who are academically under-prepared for college-level work (Galuszka, 2009), and have low levels of literacy skills beyond alphabetic literacy; students also have low levels of functional, technical, and critical literacy skills (Kynard & Eddy, 2009).

Teaching New Literacy Skills (NLS)

Research shows that successful completion of the first year of college considerably improves the student’s chances of persisting to graduation (Levitz & Noel, 1989; Upcraft and Gardner, 1989). Therefore, student success during the first year is of great importance to university officials. Studies on the number of college students who drop out prior to the start of the second year vary; nevertheless, the numbers are significant. According to the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (1999), more 50 % of the students who drop out do so in the

first year. Tinto (1978) reports that over 75% of students leaving do so at some point during the first year. In their work with over five hundred colleges and universities, Levitz and Noel (1989) reveal first-to-second year drop-out rates remaining relatively constant at approximately one-third for full time, entering college students across the nation, if there are no retention intervention systems put into place by the institution.

Most of the theoretical basis for best practices in distance-learning, particularly Online Writing Instruction (OWI), is from a constructivist perspective, but some sources assert that a new theoretical approach is needed. The most common pedagogy used for online learning, according to Weller (2002) is constructivism. In constructivism, learning is achieved through dialogue with others; the context of learning is emphasized which leads to a project or research approach; collaboration is dominant, and the teacher acts as a facilitator (Weller, 2002, p.65). The disadvantages to a constructivist pedagogy, stemming from the lack of adequate instructor input, involvement, and guidance, include that it is time-consuming, frustrating for the learners, a “smokescreen for poor teaching,” and leads to “mistaken beliefs” as the learners may adopt a dominant learner’s view that may be factually incorrect (p. 66). In other words, constructivism can be problematic for both students and their instructor, because students may be “lost,” or have a faulty understanding of the instructor’s expectations, and not know that they are lost. In an OWI environment, when the instructor does not have the benefit of frequent face-to-face contact with students in an online environment, particularly when there is a heavy emphasis on collaboration, a dominant student in the group, who has misunderstood the assignment or the instructor’s expectations, can lead their entire group down the wrong path, and cause havoc for the entire group and the class overall. If the instructor is not in frequent and consistent communication with the student’s, both individually and collaboratively to the group, the end result can be disastrous.

Chickering and Gamson (1987) described how important it is for students to be engaged in the learning process. They proposed that students must do more than just listen, “they must read, write, discuss, or be engaged in solving problems. Most important, to be actively involved, students must engage in such higher-order thinking tasks as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation” (p. 2). Research shows an evolution of the role of university faculty from teacher to facilitator. Alison King (1993), professor of education at California State University, is credited with coining the phrase, “From Sage on the Stage to Guide on the Side,” in the same titled article written for *College Teaching* to describe this evolution of teaching to facilitating. As Freire ([1970] 2004) described students as “neither ignoramuses nor perfect sages; there are only men who are attempting, together to learn more than they now know” (p. 63). Freire referred to the concept of community, or as some would call, the “Community of Scholars,” which is a foundational premise of Constructivist Pedagogy.

Similar to the constructivist pedagogy is a collaborative pedagogy where social learning through dialogue and group work is dominant. The disadvantages to a collaborative approach includes fostering dependence in learning, resistance and reluctance of individual group members, time and task management problems, and assessment of work (Weller 69-70). Constructivism and collaborative learning pedagogies often constitute the majority of online pedagogy as teachers often use an online pedagogy that has been adopted and weakly adapted from their traditional, face-to-face classroom pedagogy. While both constructivism and collaborative learning pedagogies, at first, may appear to be the best approaches for teaching and learning online, when put into practice, the disadvantages of both pedagogies can quickly, and disproportionately, outweigh the advantages.

Most recently, digital composing means composing on a class weblog or wiki; generally, as composers use digital technology to create new genres, we can expect the variety of digital compositions to continue proliferating, according to the Conference for College Composition and

Communications (CCCC)s position statement on teaching, learning, and assessing writing in digital environments (2004).. The WIDE Research Center Collective (2005) provides compelling reasons to teach digital writing, but not just for the sake of “teaching writing with computers;” but to “support the way that students write, share information, socialize, and play, and organize their lives.” I agree with the collective to a degree, however, as I found in completing this project, their premise is based on the assumption that students are actively engaged in using technology write, share information, and socialize, and that students have more than just access to the technology, but are capable of making critical decisions concerning their technology and using it effectively; moving students from simply accessing the technology and tools to applying New Literacy Skills to their writing, in their academic/professional and personal/social writing.

Distance learning, which includes Online Writing Instruction (OWI), has emerged as a primary source for acquiring new skills, attitudes, and information. Online writing instruction can be defined as “any writing instruction—synchronous or asynchronous—that occurs through online media, including both teacher- and tutor-based activities” (Hewett, 2006, p.4). Hewett, in her Web text, “*Generating New Theory for Online Writing Instruction*,” (2001) published in *Kairos*, calls for a need to develop a “theory generating stance” for online writing instruction informed by empirical research in order to move beyond anecdote. Hewett examines four common composition theoretical frameworks: current traditional, expressivist, neo-classical, and social constructivist and she identifies how they can translate into online interactions between writing tutors and students who need tutoring.. Kastman Breuch and Racine (2000) explained that online education cannot work effectively without a clear understanding of online instruction and a method for training teachers and tutors to employ the technology in pedagogically useful ways. The same concepts may apply to writing instructors who teaching fully online, or incorporate OWI methods into technology-enhanced or hybrid writing courses, with their students, especially in the context of First-Year writing instruction.

Distance learning has been defined by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2004) as education or training courses delivered to remote (off-campus) sites via audio, video, or computer technologies, including both synchronous and asynchronous instruction. Two-year colleges have the highest growth rate of distance education and account for over one-half of all online enrollments (Allen & Seaman, 2007, p. 1). In fall 2006, 3.5 million students were taking online courses; this number was a 10 % increase from fall 2005 (Allen & Seaman, 2007, p.1). Thirteen percent of all institutions surveyed offered remedial course through distance education in the fall of 2000 compared to 3% in 1995; furthermore, public two-year courses were more likely than other types of institutions to offer remedial courses through distance education due to the higher percentage of students required remediation enrolled in two-year colleges (NCES, 2003; NCES, 2004, p. 1) (from National Center for Education Statistics (2003).

Moore and Kearsley (1996) include interaction as a critical component in their model of distance education. Van Dusen (1997) indicates that social interaction is an important pedagogical tool in both traditional and online instruction, and that asynchronous communication allows students the opportunity for greater deliberation and response. Important interactions should include learner-content, learner-instructor, learner-learner, and learner-interface interactions (Moore & Kearsley, 1996; Van Dusen, 1997). Writing courses, whether online or face-to-face, are often built upon discussions, writing assignments, feedback, peer reviews, and research strategies, so the student competencies, course goals, and learning objectives should be the same, regardless of the method of delivery. The difference in the online environment is the lack of immediacy, verbal exchanges, and non-verbal cues. Young, Cantrell, & Shaw (2001) described how online students report that effective online teachers strive to establish relationships and will do whatever is necessary to make the online university classroom a successful learning environment. This includes structuring an organized, yet comfortable classroom environment and consistently communicating with students in a personal and thoughtful manner. This is consistent

with on-ground teaching theory, as discussed by Knowles (1975) that adults have a deep need to be self-directed, and the role of the teacher is to engage students in the process of mutual inquiry. Administrators must understand that the barriers affecting the adoption or rejection of new ideas can “have a significantly negative effect on faculty participation in distance education” (Betts, 1998, p.195). Faculty participation was found to be greater in schools where deans were involved in and supportive of distance education. Administrators actively involved in creating distance education programs found that faculty was more likely to embrace new programs when they were rewarded, when their “buy-in” was sought, and when all “key players” were identified and understood their roles in the new process before implementation (Duning, Kekerix, & Zaborowski, 1993).

In the area of faculty support, the literature reveals four criteria, including technical assistance, transition to online teaching, training, and written resources. First, faculty should be encouraged to use available technical assistance and support for course development, including instructional design. Software and hardware should be user-friendly and allow for efficient and effective use (Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996). Second, faculty should be offered training in online pedagogy, as they are assisted in the teaching transition. Like students, faculty should have the opportunity to assess the entire online teaching experience, including training, technology, and their satisfaction with the online teaching process (Berge, 1998; Moore & Kearsley, 1996). Third, training and assistance offered to faculty should include peer mentoring and feedback, and should continue throughout the progression of the online course (Phipps & Merisotis, 2000; Rockwell, Schauer, Fritz, & Marx, 1998). The fourth and final aspect of faculty support indicates that all faculty should be provided with written resources explaining policies and procedures for managing issues that arise from student use of electronically accessed data (Phipps & Merisotis, 2000). Instructors should be trained in using and implementing best practices for teaching online university classes. The institution, along with the faculty, should develop standards for online

teaching that will accommodate both student learning, and potential future accreditation challenges.

There has been considerable research published on the best practices for making on-ground faculty effective, but there is a gap in the literature on the relatively new phenomenon of teaching online. Administrators, and the institution as a whole, should provide incentives for faculty to teach online, instead of requirements, for faculty to develop online courses, or adapt their on ground classes to a hybrid, online, or technology-enhanced format. Title III funding, which is federal funding provided by the Department of Education, is available to HBCUS to fund faculty and staff professional development. Faculty who are interested, experienced, or chosen to teach online should be eligible to receive training funded through this program. Limit class size to a manageable enrollment, both for the instructor and the students. Class size of online classes can also affect the quality of the class. The enrollment in online courses should have definite limits (Yang & Cornelius, 2005). If the class size of online classes becomes too large, then it can be overwhelming to both the students and instructors trying to keep up with the communications (Blair & Lewis, 2003). Classes should be fairly small in size because there is so much personal communication between the students and the instructor. Oftentimes, the instructor is not able to decide on their class size, in a ground class or OWI, but 15-20 students is considered to be a manageable class size.

Some instructors have reservations about teaching and assessing New Literacy Skills, or incorporating technology into their writing instruction because they are more focused on teaching students academic writing than teaching them to do so with technology; others may avoid teaching with technology because they are uncomfortable with their own proficiency, consider it to be too confusing, for both themselves and their students, consider teaching the technology to be too time consuming, which is a valid concern for short-session course such as an inter-session or summer courses. Instructors may consider teaching with the technology more of a computer

literacy skill, which students should learn in a Computer Literacy class, and something that they are not obligated to teach in the writing classroom. I disagree; computer literacy is inextricably tied to both academic and social literacies, especially as they relate to the success of college students.

Instructors should give students plenty of opportunities to participate in discussions to stay involved in an online course. Students who are more satisfied have a higher motivation and those with a higher motivation are more likely to succeed in an online class (Bollinger & Martindale, 2004). According to Tony Bates (2003), educator and founder of WebCT®, technologies used in online teaching can assist in this transition to facilitation, and can be distinguished between the following five primary educational media: 1) direct face-to-face contact, or video conferencing to approximate face-to-face contact; 2) text, which includes still graphics; 3) analog audio, including phone calls, blogtalk, and livestream discussions; 4) analog video, such as YouTube videos; and 5) digital multimedia, which includes a combination of audio and video tools (p. 53). Bates & Poole (2003) explained that in the collegial materials course development model, “several academics work collaboratively to develop online or multimedia educational materials” (p. 141). As an instructor in the first-year program, my responsibilities extend much further than simply teaching students to write in an academic context; my responsibilities include integrating students into the academic community, teaching students to “invent the university, as Bartholomae described integrating students into the culture and language of the community, as well as teaching them the skills, or at least the principles, that they will need to succeed in the academic community (Bartholomae, 273).

Not surprisingly, the ratio of students who drop out, or “stop-out,” is lower for institutions with more selective admissions procedures. Tinto (1993) suggests that forces impacting student decisions to drop out during the first six months are quite different from those forces later in the college experience. Again, Tinto (1987) reported that as high as seventy-five

percent of students leave college during their first year of college. Students leave school for different reasons, many of which are voluntary. According to Tinto (1985), however, less than one quarter of student attrition is the result of involuntary dismissal based on institutional academic policies. Tinto (1987) argues that it is a misconception regarding student dropouts that students leave due to academic deficiency and/or institutional dismissal requirements, however, our statistics from the First Year Program's report at Wilberforce University indicate that nearly one-third of incoming first-year students are placed on academic probation during their first semester, and have reported an a steady increase of students who are dismissed from the university due to institutional disciplinary action. Most notably, students face significant separation pressures early in college as they disassociate themselves from past communities and adapt to new cultural norms.

There are many reasons that instructors may resist or be reluctant to teach in an OWI environment. Moore & Kearsley(1996) ; Webster & Hackley (1997), and Russell (2001) provide astute explanations of the reasons that faculty may be reluctant to participate in Internet-delivered education due to a number of perceived issues (Kagima, 1998; Olcott, 1994; Ditzenberger, 1976) identified six faculty barriers to teaching Internet-delivered courses: 1) reluctance to participate in distance education because they are not comfortable using new technology and may feel intimidated by the threat of their courses being monitored by the institution without their consent or knowledge; 2) perceived differences of priorities in program implementation. Administration may focus on the need for additional equipment, whereas faculty may be more interested in the need for additional time for course development and preparation; 3) faculty may view Internet-delivered education as a less effective, dehumanizing, and a compromise to the educational system; 4) individual faculty members may be reluctant to try innovative instructional technologies without the approval of peers and administrators; 5) online education must be presented to faculty, staff and administrators in a way that will make them appealing. If there are

problems with a new instructional communications technology during demonstration or during initial use by faculty, the credibility of the innovation may be damaged irreparably; 6) phased implementation of an Internet-delivered education program and the technology supporting it is likely to garner greater faculty buy-in.

Although there has not been much recent discussion about appropriate research paradigms for composition,; however, there is pretty strong agreement about what makes for effective instruction. Most composition specialists agree that instruction should focus on the writing process and provide collaborative writing situations for authentic social purposes and audiences [34]. As Chris Anson (1999) explained, the “teaching of writing . . . is “founded on the assumption that students learn well by reading and writing with each other, responding to each other’s drafts, negotiating revisions, discussing ideas, sharing perspectives, and finding some level of trust as collaborators in their mutual development”. Teaching in such contexts is interpersonal and interactive, necessitating small class size and a positive relationship between the teacher and the students (35). In order for online teaching to be effective and successful for the institution, faculty, and students educators must be learner-centered reflective practitioners (Gibson, 1998), and that "the diversity of learners, learner's needs, learning contexts, and modes of learning must be recognized if learning activities are to achieve their goals" (Gibson, 1996, p.11). The first of these three components is student interaction with faculty and other students, which can be facilitated through a variety of ways, including voice-mail and/or e-mail. Technology should provide interactive opportunities that will motivate students, and should be two-way, voluntary, and collaborative (Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996).

Communication with students, regardless of the method of delivery, should be meaningful and relevant for students, and should be explanatory as well as confirmatory (Anderson & Garrison, 1998). Computer-mediated communication (CMC) for classroom and writing/peer group writings, computer-based literary studies, and one-on-one writing instruction

that students may receive in an Online Writing Lab (OWL) are all considered Online Writing Instruction (Hewett, 2006, p.4). In its simplest form, such digital composing can refer to a “mixed media” writing practice, the kind of writing that occurs when students compose at a computer screen, using a word processor, so that they can submit the writing in print (Moran, 1993). Digital composing can take many other forms as well (CCCC, 2004). For example, such composing can mean participating in an online discussion through a listserv or bulletin board (Huot & Takayoshi, 2003). Digital composing may mean creating compositions in presentation software. It can refer to participating in chat rooms or creating web pages. Digital composing may also mean creating a digital portfolio with audio and video files as well as scanned print writings.

A second component of the teaching/learning process concerns constructive and timely feedback to students. Students need frequent opportunity to perform and receive feedback and be offered opportunities to reflect on what they have learned (Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996). Positive feedback and praise of the student's achievements by instructors are important for increased student completion and success (Verduin & Clark, 1991; Moore & Kearsley, 1996). Third, students must be instructed in the proper methods of effective research, including assessment of the validity of resources (Phipps & Merisotis, 2000). Critical thinking skills are considered an essential outcome of higher education, and students in online programs must be able to evaluate the plethora of information that is available to them in the virtual environment. Gibson (2000) notes that collaborative learning experiences foster higher-order thinking skills and help learners examine value systems.

Bates (2005) “resists the post modernist tendency to believe that everything new is good and that there are no lessons to be learned from the past” (ix) as he assesses the positives and negatives of technology in learning, which requires new approaches to teaching and learning that exploit the unique features of different technologies in order to meet the widely different needs of many types of learners” (225). While not singling out specific types of technology, Bates (2005)

states that the use of different technologies should be based on an understanding of “how people learn” and “how to design effective learning environments” based on the different technologies’ “educational strengths and limitations” (225). I based my compilation of best practices primarily on the CCCC’s Position Statement on Teaching, Learning, and Assessing Writing in Digital Environments (2004), which relies on Chickering and Gamson’s seven principles (1987, 1991) of good practice for teaching and learning in higher education. These seven principles include student-faculty interaction, cooperative learning, active learning, prompt feedback, time-on-task, communicating high expectations, and respect for diverse talents and ways of learning. Chickering and Gamson’s principles provide an entry point into the recommendations for online writing pedagogy.

Chickering and Gamson (1987) described how their principles were created in an attempt to direct students and faculty to focus their work in improving undergraduate education. Graham, Cagiltay, Craner, Lim, & Duffy (2000) reported that the *Seven Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education* serve as a practical lens for evaluating online courses in accredited online university programs; Diamond (2002) described how these seven principles for good practice have become accepted as the best description of teaching practices that promote student learning. Crichton and Childs (2004) described how it is critical to see online teaching as a learned and nurtured practice, because previous studies suggest that many early online faculty members were given online teaching assignments without training, right along with their students. Winegar (2000) researched faculty attitudes toward the use of Chickering and Gamson’s (1987) seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. Winegar (2000) discovered that faculty had a positive attitude toward using these principles, and he described significant relationships between faculty attitudes toward Chickering and Gamson’s seven principles and faculty-reported use of associated pedagogical techniques in teaching. Winegar went on to describe three statistically significant relationships, two positive and one negative.

The principle of providing prompt feedback and the practice of constructive criticism, along with the principle of assessment were each found to be used by the online university faculty in the study. Winegar (2000) also reported a significant negative relationship between the principle of accommodating diverse talents and learning styles, and the practice of publishing the instructor's class notes on the Internet, and concluded that "faculty who teach web-based courses are enthusiastic about teaching those courses regardless of their particular motivation for teaching them" (p. 64). John Sexton (2003), president of New York University (NYU), refers to this new workforce as "cyber-faculty," and stated that, Cyber faculty will have quadruple-powered capacity: first, a level of technological sophistication well beyond what we associate with all but a few of today's faculty and possibly even beyond what we will associate with many of tomorrow's faculty; second, an unusually creative appetite for deconstructing traditional teaching and research and reconceptualizing them; third, an advanced competence in a substantive and traditional academic discipline; fourth, and most important, an unusual talent to inspire collaboration among contributors with diverse expertise in innovation. (p. 1) Palloff and Pratt (1999) have concluded that because students cannot tell the race, gender, or physical characteristics of each other and their teachers, online education presents a bias-free teaching and learning environment for instructors and students. This may be another unique advantage of the online university classroom.

Bates (2005) stated that although online university courses have become more commonplace, the lack of proper faculty training is considered to be a significant barrier to effective online teaching. Palloff and Pratt (2003) emphasized a learner-focused, self-directed approach to facilitating the acquisition of knowledge in the online classroom. The CCCC Position Statement on Teaching, Learning, and Assessing Writing in Digital Environments (2004) advises instructors to "incorporate principles of best practices in teaching and learning," such as encouraging "contacts between student and faculty," developing "reciprocity and cooperation among

students,” using “active learning techniques,” giving “prompt feedback,” emphasizing “time on task,” communicating “high expectations,” and respecting “diverse talents and ways of learning.” These principles are the foundation for the compilation of best practices for this study, particularly for small, private HBCUs that have limited operational budgets to purchase licensing agreements for standard Learning Management Systems, and rely on open-source tools to incorporate technology into their pedagogy.

Implementing the first three principles, encouraging contact, developing cooperation, and using active learning techniques, into the online writing course can be achieved when instructors develop instructional methods that build a sense community among the learners. To experience true success with implementing online course, particularly across the curriculum, and not simply in first-year courses, the community of scholars at Wilberforce needs to support the effort; the community includes three of pertinent factors: the institution, which includes administrators and academic leadership, the faculty, and the students. Three essential criteria have been cited as critical components of the course development benchmark. Each campus should adopt guidelines which offer faculty and program developers minimum standards for course development, design, delivery, and learning outcomes (Howard, Discenza, & Turoff, 2004; Phipps & Merisotis 2000). Much of the literature on quality standards focuses on faculty as key decision makers in regard to developing policies and procedures for distance learning programs; (American Federation of Teachers, 1998; American Association of University Professors, 1999; and WCET, 2005). The second criterion deals with instructional materials. It is essential that instructional materials be reviewed periodically to ensure they meet program standards (Phipps & Merisotis, 2000). Academic standards for programs or courses delivered online should be the same as those delivered on the campus where they originate (Inglis, Ling, & Joosten, 1999, 2002). In 1999 the National Education Association (NEA) approved guidelines for ensuring quality distance education courses, including an assertion that the content must meet state and local standards and

be subject to the normal process of collegial decision-making (NEA online, 1999). Third, courses must be designed to require students to engage themselves in analysis, synthesis, and evaluation as standard design principles for course and program requirements (Moore & Kearsley, 1996). The design of the course and the software used should include features that help support and define boundaries for online interaction (Buchanan, 2004; Harasim, Hiltz, Teles, & Turnoffs, 1995).

The area of student support includes four essential criteria. First, the primary information that students must receive includes admission requirements, tuition and fees, books and supplies, technical and proctoring requirements, and student support services (Phipps & Merisotis, 2000; Berge, 1998). Second, students should be provided with hands-on training and information to aid them in securing material through electronic databases, interlibrary loans, government archives, news services, and other sources (Phipps & Merisotis, 2000; WCET, 1997). Third, throughout the course or program, students must have access to technical assistance, including detailed instructions on the use of electronic media, practice sessions prior to beginning the course, and convenient access to technical support staff (Phipps & Merisotis, 2000; WCET, 1997; American Council on Education, 1996). Fourth, questions directed to student services personnel should be answered accurately and quickly, with a structured system in place to address student complaints (Phipps & Merisotis, 2000; NEA Online).

One of the most important issues that respondents indicated in the CCCC's report was the need for students to be adequately oriented and well prepared for OWI courses. These imperative skills and competencies, from the respondents' perspectives, were technology orientation, time management skills, and the "ability to be successful. The respondents in the CCCC study indicated that students in online writing courses gained some kind of advantage in terms of logistical flexibility, development of self-directedness and self-discipline, adeptness at using the computer, and development of personal accountability among other skills that enable success in

college. Surprisingly, none of the higher-rated skills addressed writing instruction for the fully online students, while the final two items listed for hybrid students did indicate some writing progress: development of writing skills and benefits from receiving asynchronous feedback. Validating these responses, respondents reported that students were more disadvantaged by their OWI in such areas as support to make the transition to college, improvement of critical thinking skills, recognition of the need for details in writing, sensitivity to audience, and development of stronger reading and writing skills (CCCC Committee for Best Practices in OWI, (April 2011), Initial Report of the CCCC Committee for Best Practice in Online Writing Instruction (OWI). A recent CCCC study conducted to determine Best Practices for teaching writing an OWI included only one respondent from an HBCU or MSI; Jackson State University, no other HBCU or MSI was identified. The survey did not target any specific demographic, which makes an understandable starting point for the research, but provides a “one size fits all” approach to recommendations in their collection of best practices.

The principle of community “ensures the integration of all individuals as equal and competent members of the institution” (p. 36). There is an emphasis on frequent and rewarding contact both inside and outside the classroom and that involves contact with both faculty and other students. The principle of commitment states that effective retention programs are marked by a commitment to the students they serve and the welfare of those students. The underlying values and commitments of the institution note a student-centered focus found in the attitudes of all those working there (Tinto, 1990). An abundance of research verifies the significant importance of the students’ first year of college in terms of retention and longer term persistence.

Assessing New Literacy Skills (NLS)

Assessment takes the form of formal assessments (major and minor writing graded assignments) and informal assessments (activities and exercises). Student writers enter the classroom with diverse needs and skills, including multiple languages, grammars, cultures, and extracurricular literacy practices; therefore, various approaches and assessments are necessary in order to decrease the gaps between more-advantaged and less-advantaged writers. Current research on writing makes these things clear: Instructional practices, writing genres, and assessments should be *holistic, authentic, and varied*, regardless of the method of delivery (National Council of Teachers of English, 2008).

Types of writing assessments in OWI may include formal or informal assessment; or formative, summative, and multi-modal assessments. Formative writing assessments provide feedback to instructors and their students over the course of an instructional unit or term. Some common methods of formative writing assessment include commenting on drafts, soliciting peer response, and holding writing conferences. Summative writing assessments usually occur after some instruction has occurred, and involve assigning a value (i.e., a letter grade on a final essay or portfolio, or a standardized test score) that articulates a measure of student achievement in writing with a value that has been recorded (National Council of Teachers of English, 2008). Considering the major impact that assessment has on the community of scholars, I was quite surprised that I found so little published research regarding assessing college-level writing and New Literacy Skills in an OWI environment.

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According to Madeleine Sorapure (2006) in "Between Modes: Assessing Student New Media Compositions" argues that it is a mistake to assess multimodal compositions using a broad rhetorical approach." Instead, she argues, instructors should assessing multi-modal compositions by examining the integration of the modes being used; specifically, using metaphor and metonymy to discuss multimodal compositions. As Sorapure (2006) posits:

The weakness of a broad rhetorical approach is that it doesn't in itself offer any specific guidance or criteria for handling the multimodal aspects of the composition. Moreover, assessment is very much about context and needs to take into account the particular circumstances of the course, the students, and the teacher, as well as the possibilities afforded by the assignment, the modes, and the medium. Even if it were possible, then, it

would be unwise to apply a set of assessment criteria to all types
of assignments at all places. (p.3)

I agree with Sorapure (2006) that assessment must consider the context of a particular course particularly when writing instructors assess New Literacy Skills in New Media projects, especially when students and instructors are using free and open-source tools. Assessing New Media or multi-modal projects may present a precarious challenge to FYC instructors because of the nature of these projects, as they often include text, images, and other media. In such instances, as Murray et al (2009) recommended, a rhetorical approach does encompass the context and the affordances of multimodal projects. Selfe and Takayoshi (2007) in *Multimodal Composition: Resources for Teachers* provide clear strategies, and I would argue, best practices, for instructors to integrate multimodal theory and practice within the FYC classroom, specifically through audio and video assignments. Murray et al (2009) provided useful strategies to approach and assess New Literacy Skills in multi-modal product using a modified traditional writing rubric that can be easily interpreted for both alphabetic and multimodal assignments. Traditional writing program rubrics, which are focused specifically on printed text, are often based upon the rhetorical principles that Takayoshi and Selfe (2007) mention above. Therefore, as the form of the composition changes, the traditional writing program rubric must be modified to assess multimodal compositions effectively and fairly. Many FYC instructors are still concerned about the best ways in which to assess their students' multi-modal texts.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Throughout the course of this project, my primary goal was to compile a set of best practices, as perceived by the participants in the community of scholars, within the small, private HBCU for teaching and assessing New Literacy Skills in an OWI environment. I used Participatory Action Research (PAR) methods, serving dual roles in this project, as both an active participant the community of scholars at Wilberforce University, as well as the researcher for this project. I began this project with a pilot study, Phase 1 of the project, by observing my students and obtaining their perspective on applying New Literacy Skills in their hybrid classes through my observations and a series of surveys. I noticed several trends with my students' responses. The next semester, I started Phase 2 of the project, when I recruited two of my colleagues at Wilberforce, and submitted the same surveys to their first-year writing classes, and asking my colleagues at Wilberforce University about their experiences with teaching New Literacy Skills in their first-year writing courses.

After speaking with my colleagues and reviewing the students' surveys, I noticed more trends; my colleagues' experiences were similar to my own, and their students' responses were similar to my students, regarding their experiences. To broaden the scope of my research, I submitted an instructor survey to other first-year writing instructors at other small, private HBCUs to learn of their methods of incorporating technology to teach their students New Literacy Skills in their writing courses. The results of these surveys, collected from students and instructors at Wilberforce University and other small, private HBCUs, serves as a compilation of best practices to teach and assess New Literacy Skills from the perspective of the participants within this community. I doubt that the instructors would have had the same willingness to

respond to the surveys and other communication if I were not a member of the community of scholars.

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a subset of Action Research. The term *Participatory Action Research* describes “an integrated activity that combines social investigation, educational work, and action” (Hall, 1981, p.7). The Action Research process begins with the development of questions, which may be answered by the collection of data. Action research typically cycles through the following phases: targeting an area of collective interest; collecting, organizing, analyzing, and interpreting data; and taking action based on this information (Calhoun, 1993). The primary goal of participatory action research is to change practices, social structures, and social media which maintain irrationality, injustice, and unsatisfying forms of existence. This approach to PAR was intended to be a research activity, as applied research is defined as “a systematic study of a situation that resulted in the production of knowledge.” Whyte (1991) emphasized the applied aspect of PAR by writing that its goal is to seek information and ideas to solve problems of an organization. In his conceptual framework, the agents of change are not researchers but members of the organization who are actively engaged in the research process. In contrast, Maguire (1987) stressed the aspect of social change that is accomplished when researchers and the oppressed collaborate.

As I reviewed the literature supporting my research methods for this study, I used a constructivist approach, focusing on the paradigm of praxis for qualitative research; specifically, Participatory Action Research (PAR), which is a common form of Action Research. Action research is a systematic form of inquiry that is collective, collaborative, self-reflective, critical, and undertaken by the participants of the inquiry (McCutcheon & Jung, 1990). The earliest mention of Action Research can be found in *Action Research and Minority Problems* (Lewin,

1946) with his discussion of Action Research. Lewin described Action Research as “a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action and research leading to social action”, using a process of “a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action”(34-35). Action research, also called "practitioner research," is a reflective investigation of a personal interest, problem or challenge. Within the paradigm of critical theory, action research is used as a form of investigation that enables classroom educators to critically examine issues of interest in the context of their classrooms in an attempt to improve their own practice.

Action implies that the practitioner will be acting as the collector of data, the analyst, and the interpreter of results. As a research methodology, Action Research is a continuous, evolving and reflective process. In essence, Action Research considers relationships, communication, participation, and inclusion of all participants involved in the process, transforming the participants within the study from participants and resources to stakeholders and decision makers, as illustrated in Figure 1 below: Action Research Spiral (Stringer, 1996). In the context of this study, the participants and stakeholders are the administrators, faculty and staff, and students of Wilberforce University who make up the community of scholars at the institution, and the larger community of scholars within the academic community of small, private HBCUs.

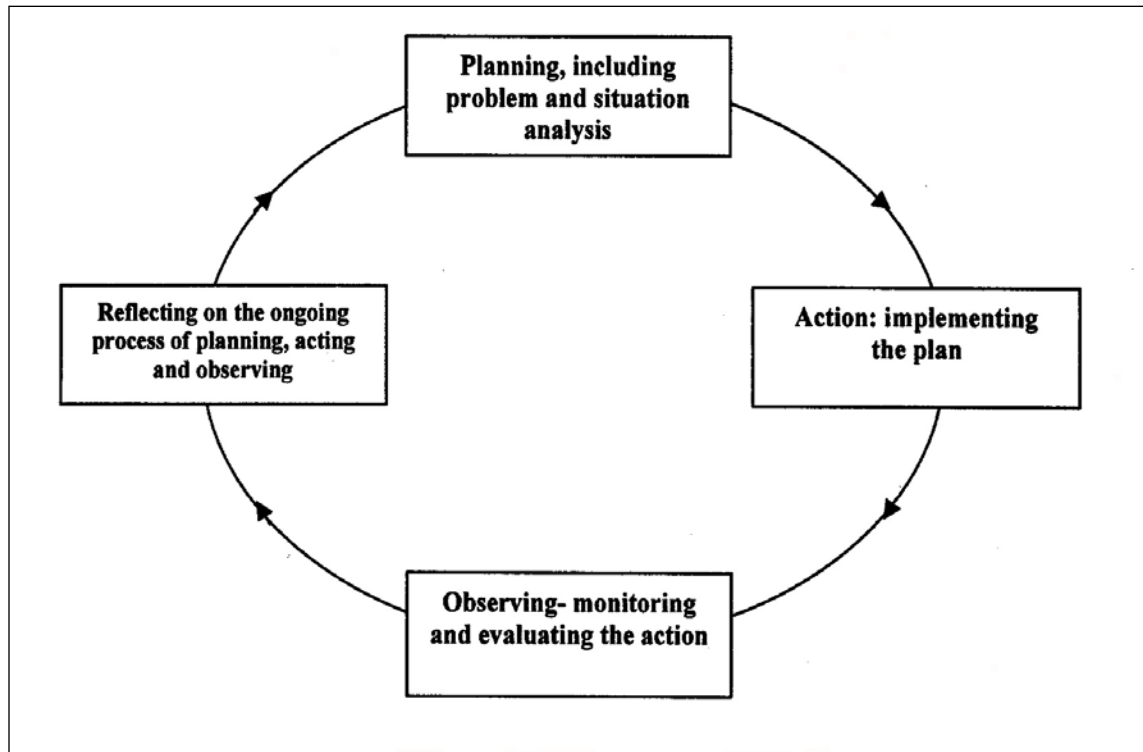


Figure 1: Action Research Spiral

According to McIntyre (2008) there are three principles that guide most participatory action research projects: (a) [active participation of researchers and participants in the co-construction of knowledge] the collective investigation of a problem; (b) [the promotion of self and critical awareness that leads to individual, collective, and and/or social change]the reliance on indigenous knowledge to better understand that problem; and (c) [the building of alliances between researchers and participants in the planning, implementation, and dissemination of the research process] building of the desire to take individual and/or collective action to deal with the stated problem (42). Within PAR projects, both the researcher and the subjects often become co-researchers about their daily lives with the intent of developing realistic solutions for dealing with the problems that they believe need to be addressed. By assuming active and full participation in the research process, people themselves have the opportunity to mobilize, organize, and implement individual and/or collective action (Selener, 1997). PAR, as a research methodology

for this study, focuses on the praxis of research, combining action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, to find and implement practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to those within the community, and more generally the prospering and overall improvement of individuals and the collective communities (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). This perspective allowed me to explore the many different opinions from a representative sample population of participants, my students and the community of scholars at Wilberforce University.

The qualitative nature of participatory action research (PAR) is suitable for transformation and integration of theory and practice, also called “praxis” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). As a teacher, this blend of theory and practice was well-suited for this study, as I am more acutely aware of what happens in my own classroom and my institution than current practices and theories in the field. I situated my study in this paradigm because I wanted to critically reflect on my own classroom and teaching practices as well as the writing products and interactions of my students, particularly first-year students, and other first-year writing instructors at Wilberforce University. My investigations into such a multidimensional topic as social justice were well suited by a methodology that allowed a plurality of voices to be heard (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) maintain that the constructivist critical theory paradigm has less emphasis on formulated hypotheses, sampling frames and predetermined research strategies associated with quantitative research. In contrast, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) emphasize “the constructivist mode of inquiry allows the researcher to follow a path of discovery, using qualitative works that have achieved the status of classics in the field” (p. 200).

The purpose of Action Research, particularly Participatory Action Research, is to identify problems within the participants’ community, and resolve those problems within the community. The main role, however, for the action researcher, is to nurture and educate local leaders within the community to the point where they can take responsibility for the process. This stage of the research is reached when the participants within the community understand the methods and are

able to continue operating under the changes that have been implemented, to solve or resolve the problems identified by the researcher, when the initiating researcher leaves (p. 11). Reason (1994) describes the purpose and strategy for PAR as a “double-objective;” to produce knowledge and action directly useful to a group of people-through research, adult education, and sociopolitical action.

The second aim of PAR is to empower people at a second and deeper level through the process of constructing and using their own knowledge (p. 328). Reason notes that researchers who utilize this approach must work with a genuine effort to honor the wisdom of the participants. He maintains that the entire notion of creating dialogue among educated people is to produce knowledge and have a better understanding of a situation. Reason suggests that PAR allows problems to be explored from participants’ perspectives and liberates them to explore and evaluate the problems by using critical reflection and questioning. Reason described PAR as an emerging paradigm of cooperative experimental inquiry in which research is conducted “*with and for people rather than on people*”(p1). Stringer (1996) describes the three phases of PAR: looking/observing, thinking/reflecting, and acting/implementing.

The “looking” phase requires a researcher to construct a portrait of the situation by gathering and presenting background information; this is often the first phase of Teacher Research, when a teacher observes a problem or situation that affects their students or community. In the “looking” stage, the researcher defines and describes the participants within the community, and describes the problem to be investigated and the context which it is set. In addition, the researcher observes and describes what all the participants (educators, group members, managers, etc.) have been doing during the “looking” phase. The “thinking” phase focuses on interpreting, evaluating, and explaining the situation that the researcher constructed in the “looking” phase. During the “thinking” phase, the researcher reflects on what participants have been doing, evaluating areas of success as well as failures, issues or problems, as well as

barriers that may prevent, or have prevented resolving the issues or problems. During the “acting” phase, the researcher focuses on resolving issues and problems by implementing possible solutions to the problems observed during the “looking” phase and evaluated during the “thinking” phase, evaluating the effectiveness, appropriateness, and outcomes of those activities.

During the “acting” phase, the researcher formulates solutions to solve the problems that were described in the “looking” and “thinking” phases (p. 5). O’Brien (1998) defines PAR simply as “learning by doing.” The common scenario within a PAR project includes – an individual or a group of people identify a problem, do something to resolve it, see how successful their efforts were, and if not satisfied, try again” (p. 3). Furthermore, O’Brien (1998) defines the role of the Action Researcher is to implement the Action Research method in such a manner as to produce and implement a mutually agreeable outcome for all participants, with the process being maintained by them afterwards. To accomplish this goal, the researcher may need to adopt several different roles at various stages of the process, such as planner, leader, catalyzer, facilitator, teacher, designer, listener, observer, synthesizer and reporter; these are roles that teachers often play within their classroom and community of scholars, which makes Action Research an appropriate and ideal methodology for pedagogical research.

Design of the Study

Phase 1, the pilot study, or in my case, the “looking/observing” phase of the study, I documented trends in student responses to three surveys, as noted in Appendix A-D. The pilot study served as a pilot study for first-year writing courses at Wilberforce University, primarily to determine if we, as instructors of first-year writing, could and should use free, open-source technologies, such as Blogger, a free blogging website, GoogleDocs, a free document-sharing service; both Blogger and GoogleDocs are provided by Google, and Engrade, a free online grade book to teach digital literacy, and determine the effectiveness of using those tools to teach New

Literacy Skills, as teaching and assessing 21st Century Skills was one of the outcomes assigned to first-year writing courses by the Vice President of Academic Affairs. The pilot study documented trends in my students' survey responses, challenges in reading, writing, and publishing in digital contexts as a class, and recommendations/lessons learned, and included surveys and general observations of the class' overall attitudes and collective responses when we discussed issues of literacy as a class. The primary population for the pilot study was students enrolled in my first-year writing courses at Wilberforce University.

I started the pilot study, Phase 1, based on my observations and problems with teaching at Wilberforce University. After obtaining an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Oklahoma State University, as Wilberforce University did not have an IRB office or committee in place, I invited all students enrolled in all three sections of my first-year writing courses to participate in the study through a class announcement on the blog and an email invitation. The Conference for College Composition and Communication (CCCC) published a groundbreaking report in 2011 built on the Sloan Consortium's report of "Quality Pillars" or best practices in online learning, to create their study to build best practices for online writing instruction (OWI) in the report titled *Initial Report of the CCCC Committee for Best Practice in Online Writing Instruction (OWI)*. The Sloan Consortium report, which was the foundation for the CCCC report, identified the elements of "quality pillars," or best practices, in online learning as learning effectiveness, cost effectiveness and institutional commitment, providing access to all learners who wish to learn online, and will be able to do so successfully, and faculty satisfaction, and student satisfaction; ensuring that both students and faculty are successful in teaching and learning in online environments, and pleased with their experiences (Moore, 2005). For this research study, I constructed three survey instruments for this study for the students in Phase 1 and 2, and one survey for other first-year writing instructors at small, private HBUCs, based on

the framework provided by the CCCC to compile and build a set of best practices for teaching and assessing OWI in small, private HBCUs.

The Composition I courses were taught in a computer lab, and the Composition II class was taught in a technology-equipped classroom, that included an instructor's computer and projector, twice a week, and in the computer lab once a week. The content of the courses differed slightly; however, the structure of all three classes was the same. In Phase 1, the pilot study, I used free, open-source, readily available tools to establish a "low bridge" approach, and scaffolding to build on the knowledge and tools with which students were already familiar, to teach and assess New Literacy Skills to my students. Scaffolding instruction as a teaching strategy originates from Lev Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory and his concept of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD). "The zone of proximal development is the distance between what children can do by themselves and the next learning that they can be helped to achieve with competent assistance" (Raymond, 2000, p.176). The scaffolding teaching strategy provides individualized support based on the learner's ZPD (Chang, Sung, & Chen, 2002). In scaffolding instruction a more knowledgeable other provides scaffolds or supports to facilitate the learner's development. The scaffolds facilitate a student's ability to build on prior knowledge and internalize new information. The activities provided in scaffolding instruction are just beyond the level of what the learner can do alone (Olson & Pratt, 2000). The more capable other provides the scaffolds so that the learner can accomplish (with assistance) the tasks that he or she could otherwise not complete, thus helping the learner through the ZPD (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). Therefore the goal of the educator when using the scaffolding teaching strategy is for the student to become an independent and self-regulating learner and problem solver (Hartman, 2002).

All students who were enrolled in the classes were invited to participate in the study. The primary research problem for the pilot study focused on teaching and assessing New Literacy

Skills, particularly digital and critical literacy skills to students with low levels of alphabetic, technical, and critical literacy skills with limited access to digital technology and digital tools. The surveys distributed to students asked open and close-ended questions for students to describe their literacy practices, particularly how they move from selecting a text, analyzing it, and writing about it in a digital format.

In Phase 1 of the project, I used a free blogging site, BlogSpot, to distribute the course syllabi, announcements, assignment descriptions, and handouts as a “Literacy Bridge” to allow students to submit a series of journal responses, essays, and peer reviews on the blog, viewable only by the class, and submitted an electronic portfolio at the end of the semester. I administered three surveys throughout the semester; the third week, in the middle of the semester, and at end of the semester to analyze the students’ responses. Students enrolled in both classes of Phase 1 were required to write and submit a draft of three essays, which received a preliminary grade, and final drafts of those essays in an electronic portfolio. Students had the option to submit their essays as comments on the course blog. Other options for submitting their essays included creating their own blog on Blogger.com, sharing documents through GoogleDocs, or emailing their essays to my Gmail account, which I created and used exclusively for receiving and responding to students’ assignments. In addition, students were required to post at least two posts to the course blog each week.

Throughout the first semester of the pilot study, students submitted a series of course-related journal responses to prompts that I posted on the course blog each week. In the beginning of the semester, students took a brief survey to document their personal backgrounds, confidence level with using computer for writing and research, definitions of literacy, and primary reasons that they use their computer, such as playing games, social networking, performing research, or writing an online journal or blog. Students completed several research assignments that involved reading and analyzing digital texts and other resources published in digital formats. Some of these

exercises included finding and evaluating online reviews, articles, and other digital sources and reviewing and commenting on other students' drafts as responses on their blogs.

During the first few weeks of the first semester, students selected and read a novel of their choosing that must have a movie adaptation that demonstrates how literacy/education influenced the main character (s) to overcome serious challenges. The purpose of having them read the novel was two-fold; first, to increase their alphabetic literacy skills, through reading the novel as a class, and participating in focused group discussions, and second, to construct a bridge between the printed text and film versions of the novel. I gave students a list of novels to vote on, as a class, giving them an opportunity to participate in their teaching and learning process, and challenging them to use critical literacy skills to research the novels and make a collective decision on the readings. Their options were: *Push* by Sapphire, dramatized in the film *Precious*, *The Blind Side* by Michael Lewis, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs, *Native Son* by Richard Wright, and the biography *Malcolm X*. I allowed students to select a text, as a class, and read the novel and engage in several focused discussions to draw out the issues demonstrated in the texts to strengthen alphabetic literacy skills (reading, writing, and comprehending). Then I incorporated levels of critical literacy skills; finding the issues and discussing how these issues are demonstrated throughout the text and eventually the film. Students then found several articles and reviews online, and wrote their own short analysis of the films on the blog; building and applying New Literacy Skills to their writing.

The students selected both *Push* and *The Blind Side* as a class, and viewed the dramatized versions of the novels, *Precious* and *The Blind Side*, as a class. We discussed differences between novel and films, their expectations as readers and viewers, and portrayal of issues that were demonstrated in both of the films. After students viewed the films *Precious* or *The Blind Side*, they posted several blog entries, as journal responses, analyzing the issues present in novel, as well as issues related to literacy and technology. Throughout the semester, students wrote several

essays, including a descriptive narrative essay, a comparison and contrast essay, an argumentative essay, and an oral presentation in Composition I; and a short story analysis, poetry analysis, drama analysis, and oral presentation in Composition II. Students based their argumentative essay on issues that were present in the novel or film, such as homelessness, teen pregnancy, welfare, juvenile delinquency, alternative education, foster care, interracial adoption, criminal justice, drugs, poverty, health care, and incest/molestation using sources to support their arguments, or write a detailed media critique of the novel or film that they selected. Students were required to find and analyze several sources and submit a bibliography with outside sources for either option.

Phase 2 began directly after the first phase of the study concluded. I collected and compiled all data from the original subjects for the pilot study; the surveys, notes, journal responses, and observations have been documented and analyzed in November, 2010. After I completed the pilot study, I realized that I needed a better understanding of how, or if, other first-year writing instructors at small, private HBCUs are teaching New Literacy skills. The close of the pilot study led me to the “thinking/reflecting” phase of the study. I considered the findings and my observations that I made during the pilot study and they prompted me to search further, and broaden the scope of my research and focus on New Literacy Skills, and attempt to comprise a compilation of “Best Practices” of how other composition/first year writing instructors, at small, private HBCUs, are teaching New Literacy Skills. I was able to implement subtle changes “on the fly” during the pilot study because I had the academic freedom to do so in my own classroom; that is one of the benefits of teaching at a small, private university, but I needed more than my own experience and observations to support a proposal to encourage my colleagues to teach New Literacy Skills, and possibly offer additional sections of hybrid, technology-enhanced, and eventually fully-online writing courses.

Phase 2 of the study has two sets of subjects and expands the scope of my research to include other faculty members at Wilberforce, students in two additional first-year writing classes, and first-year writing instructors at other small, private HBCUs. The second set of respondents, an additional 40 students enrolled in two sections of first-year writing, was recruited from two technology-enhanced sections of first-year writing at Wilberforce taught by two other faculty members who teach first-year writing using technology-enhanced methods. I selected these colleagues because I am familiar with their teaching practices as well as their sincere concern for the university; both instructors incorporate technology into their personal pedagogies, in spite of the lack of technology they have available in their own classrooms. Both sections of their ENGL 115 classes, which is another section of first-year writing at Wilberforce, combined with the students from the ENGL 111 and 112 classes from the first phase of this study, provided my context to develop a representative sample of the first-year students enrolled in first-year writing classes at Wilberforce University.

In addition to the students at Wilberforce, I wanted to hear other instructor's recommendations and experiences in teaching and assessing New Literacy Skills at other colleges that are comparable to Wilberforce. The second set of respondents in Phase 2 of this study comprised of English faculty members at other small, private HBCUs, who use Online Writing Instruction methods to teach hybrid, technology-enhanced, or fully online first-year writing courses. I collected this data from other faculty members who teach first-year writing, to determine which New Literacy Skills other first-year writing instructors are teaching in their institutions, and how they are teaching and assessing those skills. Through these surveys, I hoped to collect new ideas, suggestions, and recommendations to compile my own best practices to implement into my personal pedagogy as well as the writing program at Wilberforce University. My interest was in their challenges as well as their successes and recommendations to teach and

assess New Literacy Skills in first-year writing courses using Online Writing Instruction (OWI) methods in technology-enhanced/hybrid or fully online writing courses.

The instructor survey responses that I received from other first-year instructors at similar HBCUs, in Phase 2, were able to provide a more balanced, broader perspective of New Literacy Skills at the HBCU/MSI from a faculty perspective beyond Wilberforce University, and establish a framework for best practices to teach New Literacy Skills in first-year writing classes at other small, private HBCUs. This framework may be applied to other small, private school, which are not deemed as HBCUs, but have the same issues of low literacy skills, low endowments or budgets for technology, and a need to teach New Literacy Skills in first-year writing classes, either as part of their personal pedagogy or as part of their university's course-level or program-level outcomes. The recommendations supported the need to implement elements of Online Writing Instruction (OWI) in first-year writing courses to teach students New Literacy Skills in first-year writing classes, as well as upper-level writing intensive classes, and provide exposure and practice in applying New Literacy Skills to professional and academic writing, as well as their personal and social communications for both students and faculty members at Wilberforce University. In addition, this study will prompt students and faculty members within the university to examine New Literacy skills beyond first-year writing courses into other writing-intensive courses in multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary projects within the university.

Phase 3, which served as the "acting/implementing" phase of this study, is my application of my Action Plan. To begin executing my Action Plan, I will share the findings and recommendations from both the students in the representative sample (pilot study and phase 2 students) as well as the instructors surveyed at other small, private HBCUs in the Phase 2 of the study at the Wilberforce University Faculty Institute in August, 2012, and obtain feedback from my colleagues at Wilberforce University. I will submit a course proposal to the Academic Policies committee to offer several hybrid, technology-enhanced, sections of ENGL111 ENGL

112 during the fall semester. If the proposal is approved, then the hybrid courses will begin in August as a part of the summer term. If the proposal is rejected by the Academic Policies Committee, then I will implement the recommendations to my first-year writing courses in the fall term in August 2012. In addition, I plan to organize a campus-wide focus group on New Literacy Skills, which will include entire community of scholars at Wilberforce University: administrators, faculty and staff, and students. This focus group, starting in August 2012, will collectively define “Literacy,” and agree upon critical skills that we, as a community, must have to be acceptably proficient as members of our own community and productive citizens in a 21st century economy. In addition, I will organize a several faculty workshop on incorporating open-source tools and technologies into the classroom as part of Wilberforce University’s Faculty Professional Development series, focusing on “making bricks without straw,” or strategies to incorporate free tools open-source technologies into our pedagogy at Wilberforce University.

To close out phase 3 of this study, I plan to the faculty recommendations into my hybrid technology-enhanced writing courses and develop several sections of online composition to launch during the summer term in 2013, targeted at incoming students or continuing students, which will function as a summer enrichment program, similar to the Upward Bound or Step-up Program. During this summer session, students will begin the class online during the first week July, continue to “meet” over the summer online, and physically meet on campus, as a class, during the last week of July to give their class presentations face-to-face, or via Skype to approximate face-to-face interaction, in one of the campus SMART classrooms. This week is often reserved as “Freshman Week,” when the incoming freshman students are able to meet one another, obtain housing, and register for classes.

Participant Selection

This study was conducted in two primary phases: the first phase, which mainly examined my students' understanding and perceptions of New Literacy Skills, and the second phase, which examined two additional faculty members' students' perceptions and understanding of New Literacy Skills. The second phase included other faculty members who teach first-year writing at other private HBCUs, to determine best practices for implementing technology-enhanced, hybrid, or wholly online FYC classes without an extensive budget to implement or support students and faculty.

Student Participants

Students recruited for both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of this study were enrolled in several sections of first-year writing at Wilberforce University. In Phase 1, the students were enrolled in two sections of ENGL 11 and one section of ENGL 112 in fall semester of 2010; I was the instructor for all three of these classes. The total number students enrolled in the selected sections for Phase 1 were fifty-one; of the fifty-one students enrolled in these courses, thirty-seven students volunteered to participate in the study and signed Informed Consent forms. The student participants, in Phase 2 of the project, in fall semester of 2011, students were students enrolled in two faculty member's first-year writing course; English 115, which is a prerequisite for English 111, if students fail to earn a proficient score on the writing component in the pre-admission placement testing, or Accuplacer testing, before enrollment in general requirement courses. Participants in Phase 2 of the study volunteered to participate in the project with no additional incentives or reimbursement than being part of a study that could change the methods of teaching first-year writing at Wilberforce University.

Pre-instruction/First Two Weeks of Class (Survey 1)

In the first survey, Question 10 asked students to describe the process in which they use to write their essays; many of their responses were similar to their answers to the question above, so I eliminated the strategies described in their answers. When students responded to Question 10, the additional information included was how they search for sources to include in their essay as evidence to support their arguments. In Phase 1, 37 students responded to this question; 7 students begin the writing process by looking up topics on Google or GoogleScholar. In Phase 2, 24 students responded to this question, and 4 students noted that they start the writing process by looking up topics on Google.

Comparative Analysis: Survey 1; Student's Writing Strategies		
	Phase 1:N=37	Phase 2:N=35
Write essays on paper	11	5
Write essays electronically	31	6
Edit essays on paper	25	12
Edit essays electronically	15	12
Deliver finished essay in print	31	6
Deliver finished essay electronically	6	31
Start essay by prewriting	5	29
Start essay by researching topics	26	5
Start essay by interests	15	25
Start essay by ease of topics	5	6
No writing strategy	1	15

Table 1: Student's Writing Strategies

In the pilot study, twenty of the thirty-seven students reported having their own computer, while seventeen students reported that they only have access to a shared computer or

public computer in the library or computer lab. At Wilberforce, students have limited access to public computers on campus, as the computer labs are only open until 8:00 PM during the week and 12:00 PM on Saturdays; the library closes at 8:00 PM on Monday and Tuesday, and 6:00 PM, Wednesday to Friday, and 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM on Saturdays. Although Wilberforce University has wireless Internet connections (Wi-Fi) available in many of the academic buildings, several of the dorms are not Wi-Fi-enabled, and the inconsistent strength of the Wi-Fi signal makes access spotty at best. The availability of Wi-Fi Internet access is useful if students own their own computers; however, many students do not own computers, which forces students to wait for the limited functional computers in the computer lab and library. With limited hours in the computer lab and library, working students find it nearly impossible to use campus computers because of their work schedules.

During Phase 1 of this project, the pilot study, students were generally uncomfortable with using the technology to submit their work at the beginning of the semester. Several of the students were vocal in their objections in class; however, only one student, in both Phase 1 and Phase 2, reported being uncomfortable with “with reading and writing electronic texts (using a computer). As the semester progressed, however, students’ comfort level in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the study increased slightly. The more experience that students used the technology throughout the semester, the more comfortable they became using it. After the semester ended, students were sending me their writing to review, including personal poetry, essays and other assignments for other classes or writing samples for internships and other programs, sharing those documents with me using GoogleDocs or posting the writing on the course blog, which was still accessible after the course ended.

Comparative Analysis: Survey 1: Submission Methods		
	Phase 1: N=41	Phase 2: N=35
Print and edit on paper	11	8
Print and turn it in (hard copy)	18	17
Email electronic copy	4	8
Publish online (Blog/Wiki)	3	0
Other	5	2

Table 2: Student Submission Methods

In Phase 1, during the class discussion on their comfort levels, eleven students reported that they felt generally uncomfortable and held a general distrust of the technology, as they are unable to track their submissions, and technical issues compounded their distrust. If students are unsure or if they are unwilling to cooperate, their initial responses to the course blog were confusion, distrust of the technology, distrust in the capabilities of the technology leaving comments such as “this doesn’t work” on their blog posts. Overall, most students in both phases were expecting to submit a printed, paper copy of their work for this writing class, as they are used to doing for their other classes. Students experienced high levels of anxiety, especially as new students enrolled during the first two weeks of class, a time in which I spent several class sessions helping the students set up their own accounts, join the blog, and establish user names and passwords for the blog and Engrade, an online grade book. Students who joined the class late expressed a feeling of being “lost,” overwhelmed,” and “confused.”

Regarding their experience using digital technology in their writing, fourteen students reported positive experiences using the technology, six students reported negative experiences, or no experience at all using digital technologies in their academic writing, while thirty of the thirty-seven students surveyed reported using the Internet for social networking purposes spending between 1-10 hours online each week on social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter. I assume that although students spend several hours online using Facebook and Twitter, social

networking sites that are notorious for security leaks, that there is a difference between their personal information and photos that they post on the social networking sites and their grades or other important information, such as their financial data.

Comparative Analysis: Survey 1; Hours Online Per week		
	Phase 1: N=36	Phase 2: N=29
0-10 hours	16	15
11 - 20 hours	11	10
21-30 hours	7	3
30 or more hours	3	1

Table 3: Student's Hours Online Per Week

Before I implemented the technology-dependent activities and tasks for Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the study, I wanted to know what kinds of tasks students were already performing online. I planned to build on the skills and tasks that students were already completing online, either academic or social tasks, before I incorporated lessons that focused on demonstrating New Literacy Skills. The students' responses from Phase 1 and Phase 2 are presented below in Table 4.

Comparative Analysis: Survey 1: Students' Online Tasks		
	Phase 1: N=34	Phase 2: N=26
Online gaming	7	3
Social Networking(FaceBook/Twitter/other)	30	17
Blogging/online journal	8	3
Downloading music	13	9
Online research	19	14
Other	7	3

Table 4: Student's Online Tasks

This discovery of students' high, frequent use of social networking and social media tools calls for further research; however, students' social networking use is outside of the scope of this project. As a future addendum to the project, I may incorporate FaceBook and Twitter as part of the discussion forum or blog posts during the continuation of this study.

Mid-term/Weeks 8-9 (Survey 2)

In the pilot study, I distributed the second survey electronically through the course blogs as an electronic survey that I created using SurveyMonkey.com. I had hoped that students would feel more comfortable and demonstrate a higher proficiency with the technology by the middle of the semester. I assumed that students would be more comfortable using the technology by the eighth week of the semester. I submitted the surveys online as a link on the course blog, and allowed students to submit their responses anonymously; the data collector on SurveyMonkey was set to "Private," which did not collect email addresses or IP addresses for the respondents. The second survey included ten questions; eight multiple-choice questions and two open-ended short answer questions (see Appendix B). Only nineteen of the thirty-seven students who volunteered for the study in Phase 1 (pilot study) returned this survey. In Phase 2, I distributed the surveys to the students of my colleagues at Wilberforce in print; 30 students returned the printed surveys. When I asked the students in the pilot study why they did not complete and return the mid-term survey, many gave the same reasons they did not submit their blog posts: they forgot, did not have access to the Internet to complete the surveys, did not "trust" the technology, or found it too difficult to keep up with the blog posts and other assignments that we completed outside of the class meeting times. In addition, the eighth week of the semester marked the beginning of mid-term exams; my surveys were no competition for their mid-term exams, including my own mid-term essay exam.

One student reported that a member of his immediate family was a victim of identity theft, and the thief obtained his information from hacking into his computer. This negative experience caused the student to distrust digital technology overall; he only used the blog to post his required responses, and chose to submit all three of his essays as printed documents. The low response rate of the mid-term survey prompted me to print the final survey and distribute print copies of the survey to return them anonymously during class. As late as Week 9 during the semester, I still had several students who have not yet accessed or joined the blog. To protect students' privacy and content from the general public, I closed the blog from being "open," which allowed anyone to view the content, to "restricted," which allowed only those students who I invited to join as contributors to view the content of the course blogs. In the mid-term survey that I distributed during Week 8, I asked students how does completing their course work, including homework and journal posts, differ from completing their homework for other classes? Their responses are compiled and presented below in Table 5.

Comparative Analysis: Survey 2: Comparison of Work with other classes		
	Phase 1: N=19	Phase 2: N=29
No difference	1	3
All assignments are submitted electronically	1	7
Requires more independence	2	1
More difficult/challenging	1	1
Easier; more convenient	1	1
It's more work than other classes	2	4
It's frustrating because the system is slow or complicated	3	1
It's frustrating because I have to submit multiple times	2	1
Lack of confirmation worries me	1	1
It's expected of me/class requirement	2	3
Heavy focus on technology	0	2

More opportunities for creativity	0	0
More instructor feedback/instruction	0	1
Less instructor feedback	1	1
More creative	1	1
More opportunities to collaborate with classmates	1	1

Table 5: Students' Comparison of work with other classes

When I restricted the blogs in the pilot study, I also restricted the ability to view any of the content on the course blogs. This restriction caused a major problem, because I posted the class announcements, weekly journal prompts, and essay descriptions and rubrics, and announcements on the blog. Students who did not join the course blog as contributors were subsequently restricted from participating in the class. Several students reported that they were only able to access class blog during class time, because they do not own a computer, and computer labs and library are often too noisy or too crowded, and close too early for them to complete their assignments.

Post-instruction/Weeks 15-16 (Survey 3)

I distributed the final survey during the last two weeks of the semester as a printed document. Thirty-four of the thirty-seven participants in this study returned the survey. Three students had either dropped the class or were administratively withdrawn from the class because of non-attendance and non-participation. The focus of this survey was a reflection of this class, focusing on the impact of using digital tools and technology for the class, and perceptions of new literacy. The final survey consisted of thirteen questions; six multiple-choice questions, and seven open-ended short answer questions (see Appendix C). Twenty-eight students reported that they read the course material online, twenty-nine students self-reported a significant improvement in their reading, writing, and research skills when using digital technologies to complete those tasks,

and twenty-two students reported that were more comfortable using those digital tools than they did in the beginning of the semester.

One of the last journal prompts that I posted to the blog was a request for students to reflect on their experience in class, which allowed students to write and post a short digital narrative on the blog. They described the things they learned in the class, such as the skill and lessons that they learned from this class that they could use in other classes, things they enjoyed about the class or did not enjoy, their recommendations for the next time I teach the class, and things they would do differently if they had the opportunity. Overall, student comments were overly positive, which I expected, as students may fear that their negative comments will affect their grade. Although I encouraged students to create an online portfolio and publish their portfolio as a blog; many students were reluctant to create and publish an electronic portfolio. I led students through the process of creating their own blogs, one-on-one and step-by-step, yet only four students created and published their portfolio as a blog. Many students were still reluctant to create and publish their portfolios online, as I assume because the portfolio was worth approximately 13 % of their overall grade. Of the remaining thirty-four students who participated in the study, eight students chose to hand-deliver their portfolios in print in a folder or binder; all eight students cited technical difficulties throughout the semester as their primary reason that they submitted their portfolio in print, confirming my assumption that they were not able to obtain and apply the New Literacy Skills proficiently to the technology.

Faculty Participants

The second set of participants, in Phase 2, includes approximately 120 faculty members at other small, private HBCUs, who teach technology-enhanced first-year writing courses. Instructor surveys were distributed electronically to the instructor's institutional email addresses that I accessed on the institutions' web site, generally from the campus directory. I distributed

surveys to approximately 409 instructors who teach first-year writing at Wilberforce University and other private HBCUs. The following table, Table 6, indicates the instructor's description of their campuses; most of which they considered small campuses, which have a total enrollment of fewer than 2,500 students.

Faculty Description of the College/University	
N=40	
Small Campus	21
Mid-sized Campus	8
Large Campus	4
Urban Campus	5
Rural Campus	2
Other	0

Table 6: Instructors' Description of the Institution

These instructor surveys were able to provide a more balanced, broader perspective of New Literacy Skills at the HBCU/MSI from a faculty perspective beyond Wilberforce University. My interest is their challenges as well as their successes and recommendations to teach first-year writing courses using Online Writing Instruction (OWI) methods in a technology-enhanced, hybrid or fully online course. The following table, Table 7, indicates the surveyed instructor's evaluation of their own Internet skills, particularly as they relate to finding and evaluating online resources, a common task that instructors assign to students in FYC courses.

Instructor rating of Internet skills	
N=30	
Not skilled at all	0
Somewhat skilled	3
Fairly skilled	7
Very skilled	14
Expert	7
Other (please specify)	2

Table 7: Instructors' Rating of their Internet Skills

Data Collection

For Phase 1 of this study, I collected data from two sources for this project: anonymous surveys and blog posts on the course blogs. I distributed three surveys at different points of the semester: during the first two weeks of class to reflect pre-instruction; during Week 9 to reflect mid-term instruction, and during Week 15 to reflect post-instruction. These surveys queried students about their perceptions of literacy, experience and comfort levels with using digital technology in their writing, and methods of writing. All three surveys consisted of both open and close-ended questions relating to students' perceptions of literacy, experience and comfort levels using technology, particularly as it relates to academic writing, and their methods of performing the writing process, as described in Appendix A – Appendix D. In addition to the surveys, all students were required to post at least two posts to the course blog; one in response to the prompt, and one post in response to another student, and complete several research assignments that involved finding and evaluating digital resources, as well as reviewing and commenting on other students' drafts. Actions and comments of any specific student, or group of students, were not reported or included in the data collected using the students' name or identifiable attributes in the study.

Data for Phase 1, the pilot study, was general data describing students' experience and attitudes concerning digital and critical literacy, writing and researching using a computer, and primary activities that they completed online. I collected data through surveys, blog posts, and observations detailing students' literacy practices, particularly how they move from selecting a text, analyzing it, and writing about it, and delivering their writing in a digital format. Data collected from these surveys was Students' participation in this project was voluntary and they were able to end their participation at any time without any penalty if they chose not to participate. The data collected through survey responses, in all three phases of this project, as well as other data collected through students' journal responses, were reported using a

pseudonym and were not connected to their grade in the course or their personal information. I distributed the first survey during the first two weeks of class as a printed document. The focus of this survey was on previous instruction, prior experience with online/distance learning/writing using technology. For the pilot study, fifty-one students were enrolled in two sections of my first-year writing courses; ENGL 111 and ENGL 112. Thirty-seven students volunteered to participate, and signed Informed Consent forms.

In Phase 2 of the study, fifty-four students were enrolled in two sections of ENGL 115, another first-year writing course, taught by two of my colleagues at Wilberforce. Both of my colleagues had experience teaching writing in an OWI environment; although neither taught any online or hybrid classes, the selected classes were technology-enhanced using various online tools and technologies. Thirty-five students volunteered to participate and signed Informed Consent forms. The first survey consisted of ten questions; six multiple-choice questions, and four open-ended short answer questions (see Appendix A). Of the thirty-seven students who volunteered for the pilot study, sixteen students identified themselves as first-generation college students, and twenty students reported owning their first computer between the ages of 16-20. In Phase 2 of the study, twenty-four students identified themselves as first-generation college students. During Phase 2 of the study, I collected the survey responses from my Wilberforce colleagues' students and compared the responses to my student's responses in the pilot study, Phase 1 of my research.

To collect survey data from the students enrolled in my colleagues' classes, I gave hard-copies of the surveys and Informed Consent forms to my colleagues at Wilberforce and compiled the data for comparison with the responses from my students that I collected from my students from the pilot study. The two faculty members distributed the same three surveys that I collected from my students in the pilot study from the first phase of this study. Neither one of my colleagues at Wilberforce taught any of their writing classes in a SMART classroom or held any scheduled class meeting in a computer lab. No personal or identifiable information was collected

from the students; only their anonymous responses to the three surveys from the first phase of this study. I compared the data compiled from the additional 40 students to determine if the problems that I encountered, in teaching New Literacy skills to my students in the first phase of the study, were unique to my classes, or indicative of literacy deficiencies with other students in first-year writing classes at Wilberforce, and to increase the validity of the study by collecting the anonymous surveys from the faculty members to distance myself from the students who are participating in the study, reduce bias, and promote a greater validity to the findings and results of this study.

To collect instructor survey data for Phase 2 of the study, I obtained the instructor's email addresses from the institution's web site or faculty directory from each of the thirty-nine private HBCUs' website listed on the Department of Education's list of HBCUs to distribute the electronic surveys to faculty members at other HBCUs. Out of the thirty-nine private HBCUs, eight schools did not list faculty email addresses on their university website. I contacted either the Vice-President of Academic Affairs or the Dean of Arts and Sciences for four of the colleges, if their contact information was published, and requested the academic officer to distribute the surveys electronically to their English faculty who teach first-year writing; I received a notice from one academic officer at Livingstone College, requesting me to submit an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application before I distribute the survey to their faculty. No information was available on the university websites for the remaining three colleges. I called their academic officers, but did not receive an answer. I created the survey using SurveyMonkey, an online survey data service.

The instructor survey in Phase 2 was open and active for 8 weeks, from September 12th to October 31st and I sent the survey to 430 surveys to other faculty members at other small, private HBCUs. Of the 430 surveys that I sent out to the published email addresses, 23 messages were not delivered, as they were invalid email addresses, and 3 instructors opted-out of SurveyMonkey

surveys, so those surveys were not delivered to the intended recipients. During the first two weeks of my survey being open and active, I received eight responses. To increase my response rate, I sent out the survey to several listservs of organizations of which I am a member, including the Association for Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW), Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication (CPTSC), National Writing Project's Director/Co-Director's List and Technical Liaison's List, Writing Program Administrator's list (WPA), and the Council for College Composition and Communication (CCCC). By the end of the eighth week, 39 instructors respond to the survey; 17 responded to the email invitation, 22 responded to the web invitation that I sent to their published email addresses and listserves, leaving 409 un-responded surveys.

Data Analysis

The method that I used to analyse the data I collected was a Comparative Analysis in Grounded Theory. I incorporated a constant comparison, where I continually compared new data with previously collected data and its coding to refine the development of my theoretical categories. The Constant Comparative Method of Qualitative Analysis comprises four main stages: 1) comparing incidents applicable to each category; 2) integrating categories and their properties; 3) delimiting the theory; and 4) writing the theory based on the categories and comparison groups (Glaser, & Strauss, 1967). The data from different settings or groups at the same point in time or from the same settings or groups over a period of time are analysed to identify similarities and differences, demonstrating these comparison by using a series of tables.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

My primary focus for this study was to address teaching and assessing New Literacy Skills, which include multiliteracies and digital literacy, to students with low levels of alphabetic, technical, and critical literacy skills, without having access to commercial or proprietary digital technology and digital tools. Overall, I consider that “good teaching is good teaching,” regardless of the course format or delivery. Teaching using OWI methods presents the same challenges as traditional face-to-face teaching, however, the challenges are often multiplied because of the absence of face-to-face communication. In an OWI environment, students do not have the opportunity to stop by the instructor’s office to discuss assignments and gain clarification; however, with diligent effort and intentional interaction, synchronous and asynchronous, students and instructors can make the learning environment successful and satisfying for the community of scholars. Best processes for teaching writing, using nearly any method of delivery, focus on process, product, and principle approaches teaching writing.

When compiling instructor’s best practices, according to the instructors surveyed in Phase 2, I considered data that was collected from my colleagues, through surveys and personal interviews, as well as survey data that I collected from other first-year instructors at Wilberforce University and other small, private HBCUS. Best practices for this study include practices for planning, implementing, and managing online writing instruction using free, open-source tools, particularly as they affect the institution’s administration, faculty, and students. The *CCCC Position Statement on Teaching, Learning, and Assessing Writing in Digital Environments* (2003) relies upon Chickering and Ehrmann’s seven principles for teaching and learning. These

principles provided an entry point into the recommendations for application to online writing instruction, as illustrated below in Table 3:

Chickering and Gamson's "Seven Principles" Compared with Writing Instruction and Online Instruction. *CCCC Position Statement on Teaching, Learning, and Assessing Writing in Digital Environments* advises instructors to “incorporate principles of best practices in teaching and learning,” such as encouraging “contacts between student and faculty,” developing “reciprocity and cooperation among students,” using “active learning techniques,” giving “prompt feedback,” emphasizing “time on task,” communicating “high expectations,” and respecting “diverse talents and ways of learning.” These principles serve as emergent themes that both institutions and instructors must consider when planning, implementing, and managing online writing instruction using open source tools. This section discusses recommendations for best practices that I obtained from my analysis of the survey data for this study, my reflections from conducting this study and experience in teaching online, as well as recommendations from the students and instructors who responded to the surveys provided through this study in Phase 1, the pilot study, and Phase 2, the continuation of the study. Implementing the first three principles, encouraging contact, developing cooperation, and using active learning techniques, into the online writing course can be achieved when instructors develop instructional methods that develop a sense community, thus creating a tight-knit community of scholars.

The following table, Table 8, was originally published by Mehlenbacher B, Miller C, Convington D, Larsen J. (2000). The table data provides a useful adaptation of the Chickering and Gamson’s Seven Principles to writing instruction, on ground or online, and describes the correlation to apply those principles to teaching writing in an OWI environment.

Best Practices in Education, Writing Instruction, and OWI		
Good Practice in Education	Good Practice in Writing Instruction	How Online Instruction Could Facilitate Good Practice
Encourages contact between students and faculty	Small class (national standards recommend less than 20) and emphasis on the complete writing process	Ease of student access to faculty through email and electronic conferencing
Encourages cooperation among students	Collaborative peer review, group exercises, and collaborative writing	Ease of collaboration and perceived sense of online “community”
Encourages active learning	Constant student application of precepts and guidelines	Students more willing to challenge authority and to take less conventional communication roles
Gives prompt feedback to students	Frequent feedback on drafts and revisions from both teachers and other students	Use of help desks, hotlines, and other course management and user assistance resources
Emphasizes time on task	Courses designed around writing task, emphasis on process from drafting through revision	Network tracking systems can monitor student use of particular materials and provide students with the opportunity to read and review materials as often as they require
Communicates high expectations	Emphasis on practice and on revision and peer review for continued improvement	Models of excellence available online, web dissemination of student work, emphasize importance of quality, call for continued involvement in online “experiments”
Respects diverse talents and ways of learning	Emphasis on meeting the needs of different audiences, use of diverse strategies	Provides different paths to objectives and alternative representations of instructional materials, self-paced, flexible access

Table 8: Chickering and Gamson's "Seven Principles," Writing Instruction, Online Instruction

Perspectives on Literacy

From my perspective and based on my experience, college-level writers must demonstrate a clear understanding of more than the connotative and denotative meaning of words, and apply those meanings to their writing. For students to be considered literate, they must be able to apply complex concepts and support to their writing to demonstrate true higher order thinking. In addition, students must demonstrate their ability to reason more effectively using the information they have, make inferences, draw conclusions, perform critical analyses, and read strategically and critically. As their instructor, it is my responsibility to accurately assess their comprehension of those skills and be able to recognize when they are not learning, and step in and help them when their comprehension is breaking down. As their instructor, I need to ensure that every student who completes my class has sufficient word-reading skills to identify accurately, and with reasonable fluency, comprehend the meaning of the words in the texts they are reading. Even at the college level, I still have students who lack basic the Alphabetic Literacy skills to read and comprehend the words in texts that we read as a class. The following table, Table 9, indicates the students' definition of literacy. I collected these students' definition of literacy from first-year students at Wilberforce University in Phase 1 and Phase 2.

Student's Definition of Literacy		
	Phase 1: N=29	Phase 2: N=24
Reading and Writing	11	10
Comprehensive Subject Knowledge	3	2
Effective Communication	2	2
Interpreting Signs/Symbols	2	0
Proficiency with Technology	4	8
Historical Knowledge/Awareness	3	1
Cultural/Social Awareness	3	0

Being Educated	1	1
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Table 9: Students' Definition of Literacy

The following table, Table 10, indicates the instructor's definition of literacy. I collected these instructors' definitions of literacy from the instructor survey submitted in Phase 2 of this study. The instructors' definition differed sharply opposed to the students' definitions above, as demonstrated in Table 10 below.

Instructor's Definition of Literacy N=38	
Proficiency in Reading and Writing	6
Interpreting/decoding symbols/information	1
Effective Communication	5
Proficiency with technology	5
Cultural/Social Awareness	3
Understanding formal language	1
Ability to analyze a text	8
Ability to access, respond, and/or respond to a text in a particular context	5
Ability to find and evaluate information	2
Ability to learn and apply job-related skills	1
Context and meaning of "Literacy" changes too quickly to define	1

Table 10: Instructor Survey, Definition of Literacy

Findings and Responses: Research Question Number 1

Regarding my first research question, "What do instructors and students within the small, private HBCU perceive to be best practices to teach and assess New Literacy Skills in an Online Writing Instruction environment?", students and faculty members, both at Wilberforce

University and other HBCUs, had several recommendations, that they perceived as best practices, for the institution to assist and ease the transition to hybrid and online classes for students, faculty, and the institution overall.

Teaching New Literacy Skills

In both Phase 1 and Phase 2, students and the instructors that I survey had several comments and suggestions that they considered to be “best practices” for both students and instructors to successfully complete the course. In most of the research that I reviewed, the research was targeted towards high school and college instructors at institution that have already implemented technology into their curriculum. Very little of the scholarship that I read addressed students or presented scholarship from their perspective as to what they need to do to succeed. As I reflected on the pilot study and compared the results from students’ responses in Phase 2, I discovered an ideological gap in my own pedagogy. I tell students that they are responsible for their own learning, yet I seldom solicit their feedback on how they succeed in learning, particularly when they are unfamiliar with the content of the class or method of delivery. In the beginning of the study, the students in the pilot study and Phase 2 were hesitant to offer honest feedback, especially in the face-to-face class meetings, because they were concerned that their feedback would negatively impact their grade if I considered their comments as a negative reflection of my teaching. Students were much more candid about their experiences, expectations, and recommendations in their anonymous survey responses and blog responses.

Students’ “best practices” were coded into two categories: best practices for other students and best practices for their instructors. Since the students did not express as many recommendations for best practices, I presented their best practices within the two categories: best practices for students, and best practices for instructors below. Surprisingly, many of their recommendations aligned with Chickering and Ehmann’s principles for best practices (1996).

The instructors indicated that they used a broad range of methods to teach and assess New Literacy Skills in their first-year writing courses. The most common methods from the instructor survey are compiled and presented below in Table 11

Teaching and Assessing NLS N=30	
Answer Options	Response Count
Tool/technology proficiency project	14
Pre-test/Post-test	5
Electronic Portfolio	13
Other (please specify): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal Assessment (major/minor graded essay):2 • Informal Assessment(non-graded or small value exercise or activity):4 • No specific formal assessment of NLS:1 • Teach NLS, but don't assess their application:3 	10

Table 11: Teaching and Assessing NLS

The instructors indicated that they used a broad range of assignments to teach and assess New Literacy Skills in their first-year writing courses. The most common assignments from the instructor survey are compiled and presented below in Figure 2.

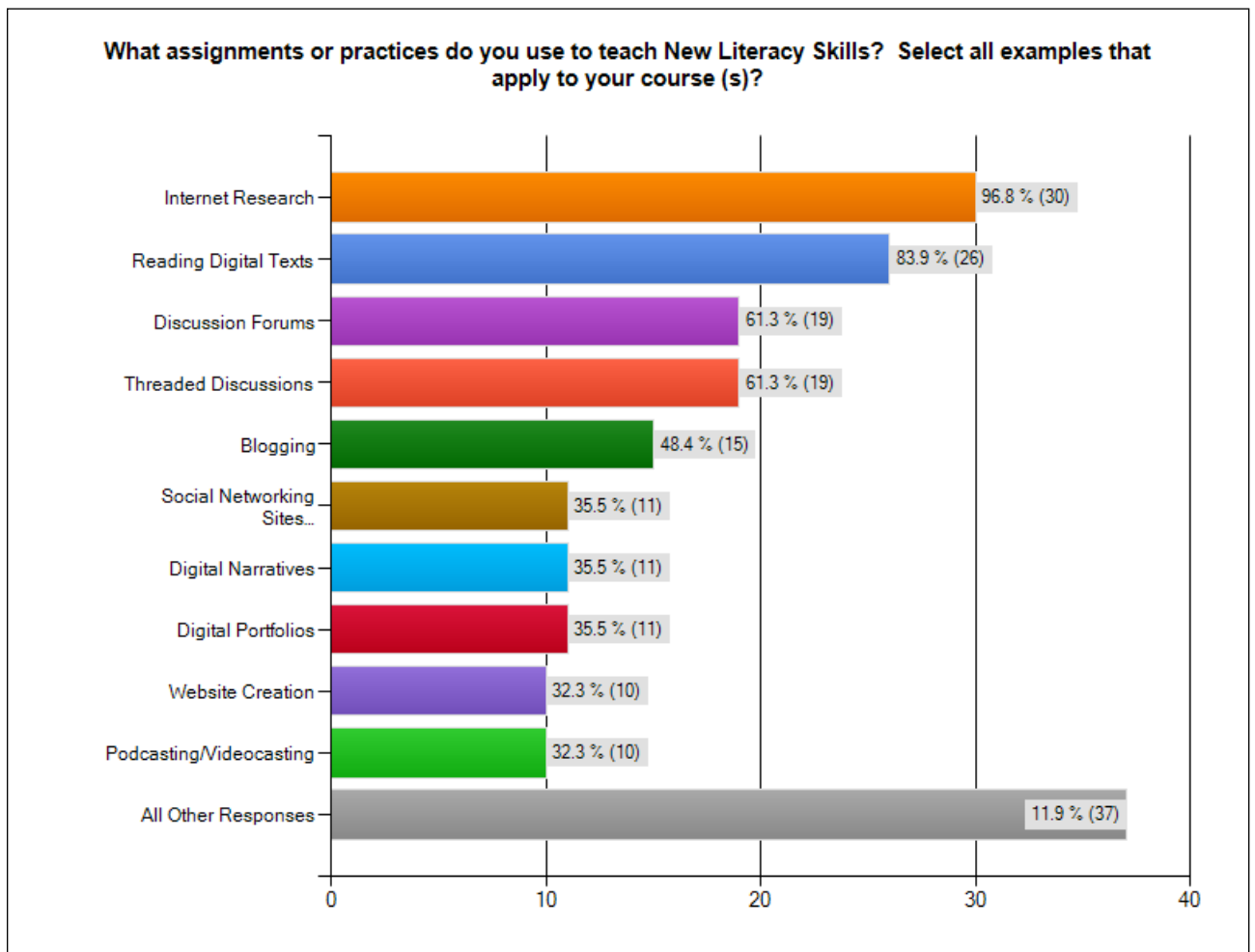


Figure 2: Assignments and Practices to teach NLS

The instructor's comments, regarding the hours spent on teaching these classes, revealed that instructors spent just as much time, if not more time, teaching in an OWI than they do when teaching a ground class. The instructors' responses are compiled and presented below in Table 12.

Weekly Hours Spent Online Teaching Hybrid/ Online Courses	
N=24	
Answer Options	Response Count
0-10	6
11-20	9

21-30	2
30 or more	5
Other (please specify)	3

Table 12: Hours online per week for OWI classes

Students and instructor participants in Phase 1 and Phase 2 felt that they were impacted by the changes erected when their university implemented Online Writing Instruction, but neither the students nor the instructors surveyed were included in the decision-making process to implement the tools and technologies. In the instructor's response to Question #4, 38 instructors described hindrances that may prevent them from effectively teach and assess New Literacy Skills. Most of their responses cited a lack of institutional support for faculty teaching OWI, as shown in Table 13 below.

Hindrances to Teaching NLS in First-year Writing Courses	
N=38	
Limited access to technology	18
Administrative roadblocks	15
Comfort level with technology (instructor/student	10
Face-to-face course overload	10
Lack of familiarity with New Literacy Skills	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other (open-ended responses) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of equal access to computer labs and SMARTclassrooms: 3 New Literacy is not relevant to course content: 2 Low comfort level; not familiar enough to assess NLS: 2 Unsure/uncomfortable with how teaching NLS will be perceived by institution/administration : 1 Lack of institutional support (IT/tech/product support):3 Cultural resistance (we've always done it this way): 1 	12

Table 13: Hindrances to teaching NLS

As one instructor responded to the question “What are some hindrances that may prevent you from teaching and assessing New Literacy Skills?” the instructor responded that access to technology is a major hindrance. Even with the technology is available on the campus, it is not equally or easily available for English faculty members:

Nearly all English faculty members prefer to teach in a technology-equipped room. There are not enough of these rooms to go around. You can request a media cart, but these are rather cumbersome and do not always fit well into the space. We do have competent technology staff to support classroom use of technology (Faculty Respondent).

Redd (2003) expressed a similar sentiment, as she noted in the *Washington Business Journal*, which named Howard University as “one of the country’s most advanced tech campuses” (Madigan, 2002, p. 23). Yet, in the composition program, the digital divide persists...our program continues to suffer from a shortage of teaching technology, inadequate technical support, and a low level of computer literacy among students and faculty members.

Other hindrances to teaching NLS were a lack of familiarity with NLS, were related to more institutional and administrative restrictions. For example, three instructors stated that their institutions are equipped with SMART classrooms and computer labs, which would be ideal to teach and assess NLS skills, as they would be able to integrate more media-related activities into the class; however, they are not granted equal access to these computer labs and SMART classrooms, as English faculty, as these classrooms are often reserved for Engineering students or Mass Media Communications major classes. I have experienced the same unequal access to these classrooms; even when I requested a SMART classroom for my ENGL 112

Composition II class, I was not able to reserve the room for the entire semester because an Engineering class met at the same time.

In addition, administrative roadblocks are a major hindrance, such as determining how when to deploy new tools and technologies, such as tablet PCs, across the university. This decision is often made by administrators and is beyond control of the instructor's control who wants to teach with the tool. Oftentimes, there is no established institutional policy for instructors to follow to implement new technology into their pedagogy. Other comments of significance include the following instructor comments regarding perceptions of teaching New Literacy Skills in a first-year writing course:

There is the assumption that one must face from colleagues that what we call "new literacy" is not "real" literacy, or that these practices somehow hinder critical thinking and understanding of and engagement with the world. This is not something I have faced at my current institution, but have witnessed at my last institution and have seen in the public discourse (Faculty Respondent)

Encouraging Active Learning

The concept of "Active Learning" was unfamiliar to most of my students in Phase 1 and Phase 2. Most of the students who participated in the study graduated from large, urban high schools with a heavy emphasis on rote learning. They were not used to being active participants in their learning, but they were willing to learn to be active, self-directed learners once they understood the difference between active and passive learning. A recurring comment that students made throughout the study was "don't limit yourself to just earning a grade; learn what you can from this class," and "take responsibility for your own grade." Once students discovered

that they were ultimately responsible for their learning and their grade, overall, they advocated other students take responsibility for their own learning and grade. As one instructor commented in response to question 7 on the instructor survey,

"Students do not learn much just sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing pre-packaged assignments and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives" (Faculty Respondent)

An online class is indeed a community of scholars; because in an online class, the instructor's focus is on facilitating self-directed learning, not on instructor alone as the expert in the class. As I stated previously, most of my students were graduates from large urban high schools. Most of them had learned to simply show up to their classes, take notes, and restate the lesson provided by their teachers. As one of the first points of contact that students have, often as first-generation college students, I feel partially responsible for teaching students how to be active learners, scaffolding on their experiences and levels of comfort with using the technology, but to adapting to the responsibility of being a college student. From my perspective, teaching students to adapt to college life, whether they attend the physical campus or not, is part my responsibility as a first-year instructor.

Communicating High Expectations

In the beginning of the term, as well as throughout the term, instructors should clearly define course objectives, learning outcomes, and all requirements for student success in the class, and relate the assignments back to those course objectives, learning outcomes, and requirements. To ease the transition to an OWI environment, instructors should consider challenges that they face in their face-to-face classroom (classroom management, student engagement, tardiness, late

submissions, resistant students, lack of participation, etc...), multiply those challenge significantly, and create an action plan to resolve those issues before the class begins. In addition, instructors must make their expectations clear; communicate those expectations with each student to ensure that students clearly understand the instructors' expectations. For example, if instructors have contact information for students before the class begins; instructors surveyed recommended instructors to contact them, extending a personal invitation to join the online community.

In reference to communicating high expectations, students were just learning to be self-directed learners, but they firmly grasped the concept of self-responsibility. During the pilot study, students posted recurring comments on the course blog, regarding high expectations. The student's perceptions of high expectations were the expectations that the students had of themselves, their peers, and their instructor. Common student responses were "we need to be responsible for our own grades." One of the blog posts that I posted right after their mid-term grades posted, asked students to share their plan for success for the rest of the semester. Recurring responses to this post were "set goals and check progress"; "check my grades frequently to make sure that I'm still passing"; "make sure that all of my teachers know that your grade is important to me"; and "do as much extra credit as I can." The students' expectations were similar to expectations that I established for students in the beginning of the semester.

Respecting Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning

Instead of maintaining the current two-tiered "Banking" system where those students who are identified as college-bound or "college material" receive a rigorous academic and often comprehensive education, while "weaker" students receive a general and narrow schooling basic skills and little else, there is a need to develop multiple pathways for student success. Freire argues that the banking system of education objectifies its students by teaching them to memorize

rigid, mystified facts, which removes them from the process of taking an active part in their education and their lives as subjects. Banking, as an educational framework, "inhibits creativity and domesticates (although it cannot completely destroy) the intentionality of consciousness by isolating consciousness from the world, thereby denying people their ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human (Freire,[1970] 2004, p.65). Multiple pathways programs are often academic success programs administered in high schools, directed at keeping at-risk high school students in school, hopefully reducing drop-out rates. Although these programs are directed towards high school students, the principles and approach of these programs is relevant to first-year programs at small, private colleges, particularly at Wilberforce University, as most of our incoming first-year students are not adequately prepared to successfully complete their first year of college without remediation. Multiple Pathways programs provide alternative options for students to obtain and complete their education, and connect rigorous academic preparation, technical knowledge, and opportunities to learn from adult, real-world settings, including the workplace.

The Multiple Pathways approach intends to prepare students to succeed in both college *and* career, instead of choosing one over the other, as the principles assume that almost all students will eventually end up in the workplace, with or without a college education, and that most workers will need to learn and master advanced knowledge and skills to sustain or advance their careers. Three primary principles of this approach are: learning both academic and technical knowledge is enhanced when the two are integrated and contextualized in authentic situations; connecting academics to real-world contexts promotes and maintains student interest and engagement; and students who gain both academic and career education stand the best chance of accessing the full range of postsecondary options and a solid start toward a personally and socially productive middle-class life (Saunders & Chrisman, 2008, pgs. 1-3). Equitable access to a high-quality college-bound education and high-quality career or technical education should be

examined as highly interrelated complements, rather than as solitary polar opposites. At their best, multiple pathway programs combine an explicitly academic foundation with a foundation of career and technical learning grounded in specific career-related activities and experiences.

The shift to a multiple pathways formulation to achieve student success disrupts educational policy and practices that inevitably disadvantage groups who are underserved and under supported by traditional schooling models and practices. Special care must be taken however, to ensure that each component of the pathway is viable and highly educative in order to avoid recreating spaces where struggling students are pushed and counseled out of mainstream settings because of flawed framings of “ability,” “merit,” and “expectations (Saunders and Chrisman, 3).

As college students, many students quickly discovered that the rote learning methods will earn the grades they want in some classes, such as Math and Science, but they will be lost in courses that require analysis, such as their writing classes. I had several students who became frustrated because I only provided them with general topics; they had to discover a topic to decide on their argument on their own. As the classes began selecting topics for their major essay, about Week 6, I posted a question to the course blog asking students “what do you do if you have tried to (fill in the blank), but it did not work the way you planned or hoped?” Recurring responses to that question were “work with my partner...then I would try to talk to them in another way” or “pick a topic I like...then I would ask my teacher or friend for a topic.” A common sentiment of many students was admonishing other students to “have an open mind; if something doesn’t work, try it another way,” and to “use the tools and resources that are available to you, including your teacher, library staff, and online resources.”

Student Registration and Location for OWI

Before students to enroll in OWI courses, they should be well-informed about the classes in which they are enrolling. They should at least know the format that the class is being offered;

however, that is often not the case. Online, hybrid, and technology-enhanced are often not distinguished in the class schedule, as the faculty respondents revealed in their responses to the instructor's survey. When asked "How are wholly online or hybrid sections distinguished from other sections of wholly ground traditional face-to-face sections," 23 instructors responded, 12 of those instructed noted that there is no distinction in the course listing.

Inviting students to participate in shared governance of the class will allow students to become stakeholders in both the writing instruction as well as the technologies that students use to produce and deliver their writing projects. I recommend for instructors who plan to incorporate a hybrid model into first-year writing courses to advertise hybrid sections of writing courses in advance, so students will be well aware that they have options. Advisors can determine whether to enroll students in the hybrid sections or traditional sections of first-year writing courses during pre-registration. In addition, students can decide whether to enroll in hybrid sections or traditional sections of the first-year writing classes, view the syllabi, read preliminary assignments, and set up user names and passwords before the first day of class.

If the instructor does not contact the student before the start of the class, or if the student does not pre-register for the class, which is often the case at Wilberforce University, then the student will not be aware that they are enrolling in a hybrid or wholly online course. The time for students to drop and add a course is usually within the first two weeks of the term; if that student chooses to drop the online, hybrid, or technology-enhanced class, or transfer to another section, the inconsistency between the course delivery and students' expectations may provoke cognitive dissonance for the student with new the class, classmates, and instructor. Their responses to question 11 explain further implications for students. Twenty-four instructors responded to the open-ended question "How do students identify and register for these courses or sections that are either wholly online, hybrid, or technology-enhanced?" I compiled their answers in as a result of recurring statements that emerged in Table 14 below.

Registration for Hybrid, Wholly Online, or Technology-enhanced Classes	
N=24	
No difference; students don't know the difference until the class begins	10
Advisor/Registrar registration	4
Campus advertising/word-of-mouth (instructors/students)	3
Courses are designated as online, hybrid, or technology-enhanced in the course schedule or online registration system	3
FYC/General requirement classes are always or only offered online or hybrid	1
Don't know	3

Table 14: Method students identify and register for OWI courses

One of the instructors made a significant response to note concerning this issue.

Students who are enrolled identify the course by course number; no other information is provided to the students until they attend the first class and receive a syllabus. If students do not feel comfortable with the technology during the first week, they are advised to drop the class. This advice causes a major problem for students, particularly if they are non-traditional working students; they may need to miss several classes during the first week of the term because of scheduling conflicts with their work and class schedule (Faculty Respondent).

In addition, this situation is a major problem for students if they register for the class after the start of classes because they are returning from Academic Probation or expulsion, lack of

financial aid. If the student drops the class, and if they are not able to find another class or section that fits their schedule, they endanger their Financial Aid because their enrollment dropped below full-time status. I was surprised when I read this comment and feedback, because the instructor described the same problem that I experienced at Wilberforce at the start of every semester.

From the instructor's perspective, the students in their classes were not adequately prepared to succeed in their hybrid or technology-enhanced writing courses. Oftentimes, there were no formal prerequisites that students must complete before beginning online, hybrid, or technology-enhanced courses, as shown in the instructor's responses in Table 15 below.

Students' Prerequisites Before Beginning an OWI Course		
N=24		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
None	70.8%	17
Advisor's Recommendation	8.3%	2
Student Petition	0.0%	0
Honor's Program	0.0%	0
Pre-course Assessment	12.5%	3
Pre-course seminar/orientation	12.5%	3
Other (please specify)	16.7%	4

Table 15: Student's prerequisites

Location was also a major issue. In line with the theme for this research project, making bricks without straw, I was interested to know how many instructors had adequate tools in the classroom to teach New Literacy Skills in their first-year writing courses. The instructor's responses are compiled and presented in Table 16 below.

Online, Hybrid, and Technology-Enhanced Class Location		
N=18		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Smart Classroom	38.9%	7
Technology-enhanced Lecture Hall	22.2%	4
Computer Lab	38.9%	7
Traditional classroom	16.7%	3

Table 16: OWI Class Setting

Developing Reciprocity and Cooperation Among Students

The majority of my students had experience with working on and completing collaborative assignments; overall, their experiences had not been positive, so they expressed high anxiety in the class when I assigned students an “accountability partner.” Based on their previous negative experience with working with a partner or in a group, they were concerned about trusting another student with their grade, as they were previously penalized for another group member or partner’s lack of participation. The purpose of assigning students an accountability partner had little to do with their grades, but was a way for students to have at least one other person in the class that the student could contact if they were going to be late to class or absent, obtain notes from the class if the student needed to be absent, and review essays with as part of the peer review process. Some of their recommendations for best practices, concerning collaboration and cooperation, were “don’t be afraid of ‘group work.’ Get started early, plan your work, assign roles, and don’t try to do the whole project all by yourself.”

Giving Prompt Feedback

From the students’ perspective, prompt feedback has two sources: their peers and their instructor. Students had comments and responses regarding both of those sources of feedback. When students solicited feedback from their peers, as well as from their instructor, they expected

to receive prompt, useful comments and recommendations on how they can improve their writing and increase their chances of earning a better grade. After the first peer review, students were responded on the blog that they needed useful comments from their instructor first, as she was going to assign the writing a grade, and their peers last, as they were simply providing another perspective on the writing. In both cases, however, students indicated that they needed this feedback quickly. As one student responded, “having good suggestions on how to make my paper better after I already revised it doesn’t really help me. I need those comments before I start to rewrite my paper so I can use them in my rewrite. I don’t have time to go back to my draft after I finished it.” Several of the students’ best practices for success in the class implied a sense of self-responsibility. A common recommendation that students made to other students on the course blog, was to “ask for help if you need it, and ask questions if you don’t understand something.” This recommendation was especially prevalent from students enrolled in the ENGL 112 course who were my former students in the ENGL 111 course.

During the pilot study, I posted the question “if you could offer one suggestion to your instructors, what would it be?” .as one of the students’ blog posts. Overwhelmingly, the students responded to “give back graded papers quickly,” and “give back papers when they say they will.” A common recommendation for other students was to “make your instructors accountable; if instructors say they are going to return your work within a timeframe, expect that they will do that; if not, ask them about it.” Students were very vocal in class about the anxiety and anger that their instructors cause them when they do not return their assignments when they promise their feedback. Their anxiety and anger is compounded when classes are cancelled due to a holiday, campus break, or campus-wide assemblies when classes are cancelled and students, staff, and faculty are required to attend. With the hybrid model, I am able to provide my feedback quickly without them having to wait until the next class meeting to read my comments.

Providing Assistance

One of the important issues that I did not consider when I created the instruments for this study is how students obtain technical or academic assistance when they need it while taking online, hybrid, or technology-enhanced classes. As many of the instructors indicated, providing adequate student services is critical to student success in an online or hybrid course. To promote success for students, particularly when the institution uses open-source tools that may not provide adequate technical support, institutions must provide students with comprehensive student services, for their technical, academic, and social issues, while they are taking online courses. Instructors should make their course materials available and easy to use, preferably before the first day of classes, and students must have contact person that they can contact when they need help resolving a technical, academic, or social issue. The students and the faculty will be better served if the institution appoints or recruits resources to assist students and faculty with making the transition to online, hybrid, and technology-enhanced courses.

For many of the respondents to the Instructor survey in Phase 2 of the study, their focus was on teaching students how to write to prepare them for their higher-level writing. At Wilberforce, higher--level writing includes writing in their upper-division courses, whether they are English classes or not, as most of the upper-division major classes include a writing component, and preparation for the Junior Proficiency Exam (a timed writing exam that students must earn a score of “proficient or higher, or take a 1-credit ‘refresher’ course” before they are cleared to graduate”) and to prepare them for workplace writing tasks. Teaching students to apply New Literacy Skills will assist them with the knowledge work tasks that many of them will have to perform after graduation. Their focus was not on teaching or using specific tools to teach New Literacy Skills; their emphasis was on teaching students to apply the skills and using the technology to produce text and complete writing tasks, instead of teaching students to use a specific tool, many faculty taught students the basic principles of New Literacy Skills, and

focused on teaching students to apply those skills, focusing more on the process of applying the New Literacy Skills, instead of focusing on the students' final product. This focus makes sense, because many of the respondents indicated that limited access to technology, especially functional technology, is a hindrance to teaching students New Literacy Skills.

For many instructors, applying the New Literacy Skills to their research and writing tasks, are required skills, regardless of how the class is delivered or the format of the class: traditional face-to-face, hybrid, and wholly online; all students must learn to apply those skills. I propose offering at least one section of digital composition in the summer of 2012, likely Composition II, for a number of reasons. Continuing students can maintain matriculation during the summer session and earn credit that they don't need to try to transfer back to Wilberforce because students will earn institutional credit for the class. Students have already completed their placement testing, because they are either existing students or have completed an Accuplacer from other institutions or proctored at a test center.

Emphasizing Time on Task

Time on task equates to the amount of time that students spend working on completing a learning task. In a wholly online, hybrid, or technology-enhanced writing class, students will spend more time completing tasks than they would if they attended a traditional face-to-face course. Prepare students for this additional time in the beginning of the term, particularly if the tool is a new release of an existing product, or if tool is completely foreign to most of the students. As with any new initiative, both instructors and students need adequate time to learn the product or tool that is being used. Allow the class time to explore the new product and familiarize them with it. As a class, discover what the product can do, what it cannot, and what they want it to do, without the pressure of having to learn the tool and produce a heavily graded piece of writing. Since the class is still learning the technology, and many students are still showing up for class for the first time, during the first three weeks is a good time to demonstrate

and implement a new tool that students are expected to use to produce their writing. Those students who register late, or show up to class late, will need to have a one-on-one conference with their instructor to catch up with the rest of the class. After that time, generally the first three weeks, instructors should remind students of the established late policy and enforce it. At the same time, instructors should encourage students to plan their time wisely, and seek help, from their instructor, their peers, or counselor in Student Services.

Time management is a major issue for most first-year students. For many residential students, this is their first time away from home. They have no one to manage their time for them: no bells are ringing to alert them of their next class, no parents nagging them to get up for their class, and no teachers and counselors urging them to go to class, or scheduling time to meet with them concerning their progress. A recurring recommendation for students to their peers was to “manage your time wisely, plan your assignments, and get organized.” This recommendation is especially helpful to students in an OWI writing course, because students have less physical interaction with their instructor and their peers, it is easier for them to fall behind in their assignments.

During the pilot study of this project, one student made several attempts to contact her accountability partner, but her partner was unresponsive to her partner as well as to my attempts to contact her. Later in the semester, when her partner reemerged into the class, we discovered that the student joined a sorority. The “pledging” activities of the sorority all occurred late at night; her class was an early morning class, for which she “simply could not wake up so early.” Her partner’s next response on the blog responded to her behavior, saying that “students need to get serious about managing their priorities. If you’re not here to get an education, you need to check your priorities and not waste the rest of our time.” The comment was directed towards the students’ partner, but was applicable to the class as a whole. In a wholly online or hybrid course, it is increasingly difficult to communicate with students when they become unresponsive,

especially when using open-source tools that are not integrated with tools the students use frequently. Engrade requires students to enter an email address to register to use the system. The student used her Gmail address to register to use the system; the two systems were not integrated into one another; neither of the systems was integrated into her institutional email address. Since the course's Learning Management System, Engrade, was not integrated with the students' email address that she checked frequently, then the messages that her partner and I sent were just piling up in her mailbox. If the students are true distance learning students and have a great physical distance between their home and the campus. In this case, I was able to contact the student through the Dean of Students; the student was still living on campus and was using the campus facilities, but she had stopped attending her morning classes. In such a situation, even if the student did not live on campus, the Student Services office would still be a critical resource to reach a student who has become unresponsive.

Assessing New Literacy Skills

Writing instruction needs to help students meet the challenges of writing effectively for many purposes. As an instructor, inevitably, I will have to assign each student a grade at the end of the term. The students' grade on their transcript is the only evidence that that the student was enrolled in my class after the end of the semester. The students' grades affect my course evaluation (poor grades tend to produce lower course evaluations), which are often the only record that I have, as an instructor, of the effectiveness of my teaching. As much as I advocate teaching students the process of writing, and implementing technology to promote New Literacy Skills in my first-year writing courses, the students' grade and my assessment is critical to the students' academic progress, and may impact other non-academic aspects of the students' lives, such as financial aid, scholarships, housing, athletics, and other organizational participation, such as joining a fraternity or sorority. Considering how student work that demonstrates an understanding of New Literacy Skills (NLS) is currently assessed, it is clear that FYC instructors, and the discipline overall, are

experiencing a transitional stage in the process of incorporating new media and technology into our FYC and other writing courses. As Yancey (2004) noted, instructors may assign multimodal assignments but often focus on the portion of the presentation in which they are most familiar, which is the printed text, to assess student work.

In my reflection, I noted that my focus on the print portion of this assignment reflected my uneasiness and uncertainty with assessing something other than a written text, which was a common theme in the instructor's comments in Phase 2 of this study. A possible solution is illustrated in the Modified Rubric below in Table 17. The table below illustrates how a traditional print-based rubric may be modified to assess New Literacy Skills in multi-modal project. The following is the table is a modified rubric used in Ball State's writing program, modified to assess multi-modal projects, adapted in table format from Murray et al's rubric (2010).

Rubric Category	Traditional Print based Rubric	Multi modal Project Rubric
Audience Awareness	Demonstrates an awareness of audience, is sophisticated, and is clearly established and maintained throughout	Demonstrates an awareness through a well-chosen selection of both words and images that best meet their needs and persuades the audience of their argument
Thesis/ Argument	Presents a clear, easily identifiable thesis statement in the opening of the essay	Presents clear thesis throughout the essay in the variety of modes that are chosen, focusing on demonstrating each mode consistently contributing to the overall argument or thesis of the composition
Organization	Demonstrates a clear sense of logical order appropriate to the content and the thesis	Demonstrates a clear sense of logical order through the variety of modes interacting and flowing with one another to support the argument or thesis
Development	Demonstrates critical thinking that is clear, insightful, in depth, and relevant to the topic.	Demonstrates appropriate use of available rhetorical possibilities that the modes have to offer, including how the student uses each mode to support their argument through the relations between modes (i.e. redundancy, complementary, supplementary, juxtaposition, and stage setting)

Syntax and Diction	Uses sophisticated language that engages the reader; manipulates sentence length to enhance the total effect of the essay; uses precise language that expresses complex ideas clearly	Uses and applies appropriate text, images, and sounds and uses the interaction among them in order to express complex ideas clearly.
Format and Design:	Integrates elements of design to effectively serve rhetorical purpose	Integrates appropriate and effective rhetorical principles of design and visual rhetoric; demonstrates an awareness of color, typeface, layout, image selections, audio choices, etc
Research/Sources	Uses sources effectively and documents sources accurately.	Integrates and documents sources into the composition, and abided by copyright and “fair use” policies.
Mechanics	Contains very few errors of spelling, formal grammar, paragraph or manuscript format	Incorporates appropriate text with very few errors, with appropriate current and functional links, images, and text that display correctly in common browsers

Table 17: Modified Traditional Print Rubric for Multi-modal Composition

A common assessment strategy that instructors use to assess NLS is to assign students an essay where they must write an essay or a report accompany a new media project—and to then derive the grade for the project wholly or mostly from the print part of the assignment without considering the rhetorical decisions that students made aside from the print portion of their submission. I agree with the intent of the assignment, as I combined a formal essay with a new media composition in the pilot student, and it was a useful strategy to teach NLS skills without being overwhelming for the students or for me, as their instructor. However, this practice also allowed me, and other instructors who use this strategy, to avoid assessing the new media work on its own, in addition to the print portion of their submission.

Findings and Responses: Research Question Number 2

Regarding my second research question, “Are instructors at small, private HBCUs teaching New Literacy Skills as a required course outcome for their first-year writing courses, or are these instructors teaching these skills as part of their personal pedagogy? How did these instructors

prepare to teach these classes in OWI? How has teaching New Literacy Skills affected the instructor's pedagogy?"the majority of the subjects who participated in this study indicated a range of levels of preparation to teach in an OWI environment. Overall, the instructors who responded to the surveys in Phase 2 of the project, indicated a need for proper training and professional development to effectively incorporate these tools and technologies into their teaching.

Training and Professional Development

To earn a greater appreciation for the online course, instructors who plan to teach online should take at least one online class or participate in an online webinar or podcast. These webinars are usually free or available at a low cost, and are often held during national conferences, such as the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Council for College Composition and Communication (CCCC). This recommendation for best practice serves a dual purpose: you will have a greater appreciation for the challenges that students face when they are taking classes online; the second purpose, online classes and workshops are great opportunities for professional development, and often cost must less than travel, hotel, and registration to a discipline-specific conference. Many courses and workshops free of charge and are available through open-source tools.

In the instructor survey in Phase 2, 24 instructors responded to the question regarding training that they received, that they were either provided by the institution or pursued independently, before they started to teach classes in an OWI environment. The instructor's responses are compiled and presented in Table 18 below.

Instructor Training Before Teaching OWI		
N=24		
	Response Percent	Response Count
No training	33.3%	8
Brief workshop	41.7%	10
Extensive training (several weeks)	16.7%	4
Online Writing Instruction	20.8%	5
Technology Training	25.0%	6
Tool-specific Training	12.5%	3

Table 18: Instructor Training before Teaching Writing Online

In Question #16, the instructor survey in Phase 2, asked instructors an open-ended question asking instructors to “describe the extent of their training.” Although only seven instructors responded to this question, two significant instructor comments and responses reflected common experiences that instructor face when they are charged with teaching writing online.

The instructor’s significant comments are compiled below.

“I was assigned a hybrid FYC course during my first semester; it was kind of a shock because I had no formal training in constructing a hybrid course. I had to make up a great deal of it by myself, from scratch. I based a good deal of it on my experiences in creating an online section of another course a few years previously”(Faculty Respondent)

“I would say that I have primarily taught myself how to use new media tools and technologies (and truth be told, I first saw a computer at the age of 22 or so, and I'm 35) but whenever I find

an opportunity (workshop, training event, etc) I participate,
because it's easier to learn from others”(Faculty Respondent)

Beth Hewett and Christina Ehmann (2004) discuss five pedagogical principles that form a foundation for training instructors in *Preparing Educators for Online Writing Instruction*: The five principles are Investigation, Immersion, Individualization, Association, and Reflection. Hewett and Ehmann’s fourth principle, Association, acknowledges that trainees desire to build a network of peers, a sense of team, or a connection with others around them (17). Effective teaching cannot occur in isolation from practical experience or contact with other teachers. Network and share best practices with each other, particularly for developing professors who are new to the online environment. Get involved in professional organizations, such as the Conference for College Composition and Communication (CCCC), National Teachers of English (NCTE), and the National Writing Project. Professional organizations have a plethora of free or low-cost resources that will guide instructors and their institutions through the process of transitioning traditional ground classes into an OWI environment.

Several of the open-source tools were mentioned multiple times throughout the instructor’s responses. The most common tools that instructors used to teach themselves New Literacy Skills, as well as tools that they used on their campuses for Professional Development, are listed in Table 19 below.

Tools for Professional Development	
Udacity: free online courses via video lectures	www.udacity.com
Ed2go.com (Cengage): free and low-cost courses/credit-earning and non-credit courses.	http://www.ed2go.com/
Alison.com: free online course (over 300), SCORM-Compliant	http://alison.com/

Peer 2 Peer University: open, community-based peer learning to professional learning, targeted to K-12 teachers	http://p2pu.org/en/schools/school-of-ed-pilot/
Teachers Teaching Teachers: weekly webcast on the EdTechTalk channel of the WorldBridges network)	http://teachersteachingteachers.org/
eduMOOC (MOOC=Massive Open Online Course): a series of videos addressing how common materials can be made more accessible	http://sites.google.com/site/edumooc/

Table 19: Open-source tools for professional development

Technology and Pedagogy

Instructors should incorporate technology based on measurable outcomes and objectives, to have a tangible measurement of their success or areas of improvement, providing an opportunity to reflect on their experience frequently, and change things that are clearly not working for the benefit of the community of scholars. Some progress in this area has been made with conference sessions on possible uses of various technological and online tools such as blogs and wikis, but more is needed. The best practices relate to the activities of teaching and learning and are not directly related to the technology itself, but focus on strategies that instructors should use to adapt their ground classes to deliver those classes in an online or hybrid format.

Wilberforce University provides students with access to the virtual library through our memberships to Ohio Private Academic Libraries (OPAL) and all 24 of their member libraries; and OhioLink and all 87 academic libraries with online access and borrowing privileges for all of these libraries. Having access to content within these libraries is useful if students are aware and able to access them. Students are able to access the electronic content of these libraries from wherever they are located, so they would not lose borrowing or access privileges if they accessed their courses remotely. One of the primary reasons for student dissatisfaction and low completion rates is delayed faculty response to student questions and assignments/exams. Setting expectations in the beginning of the class regarding grading and feedback on assignments is essential to students' success.

Students expect fair and objective grading, feedback, encouragement, reassurance, constructive criticism, and timely response (Cole, Coats, & Lentell, 1986).

When students are taking online or hybrid course, often for the first time, a non-responsive instructor is a source of great anxiety. At the beginning of the class or before the term begins, as well as throughout the term, instructors should clearly explain their expectations for students, and provide students with a timeframe of when they can expect feedback on their writing. The instructor comment is an invaluable tool for revision for students. Even when I allowed and encouraged students to obtain a wider range of comments on their essays besides my own, students would hold my comments of the most value; as their instructor, and consequently the one person who will assign a grade to their essays, my comments received much more value than their peers or other readers, as I had many students who were still in contact with their high school English teachers who read their essays before submitting them for a grade. In an OWI environment, providing prompt feedback is critical and simple to deliver.

In a traditional ground class, I often carried nearly as many essays home with me as I did the day of class when I planned to return my comments and grades on hard-copy essays. If students did not show up for class, they not only missed the lesson for the day, they have to wait until the next class meeting to retrieve their essay, or arrange a physical meeting with me in my office, which is a difficult task for students who work or live off-campus, because their schedules have time for deviations...they schedule just enough time to attend their classes, so an additional 30-minute face-to-face conference forces students to make the difficult decision, to sacrifice time from another class or take the time off work; neither option is desirable. When I deliver my comments and grades electronically, I am able to submit students' grades and my comments and students are able to view them, at any time, oftentimes, before they come to class, so they will already have access to my comments and have the ability to revise before the next class meeting.

During the pilot study, I was teaching a full course-load of five writing-intensive courses, it became apparent that I was not able to maintain and track students' essays when they did not submit the essays in the manner that I requested. I was not looking for those assignments submitted to my institutional email address, so unfortunately, I took much longer to resend to those essays submitted to my institutional email address than those submitted to my Gmail address or posted on the course blog. The students who were impacted by this delay openly expressed their anxiety, both in class and on the blog. To address this issue and ease students' fears, students should be able to confirm receipt of the submission. Although most email clients include a "return receipt" function, as a way to confirm receipt of a message, the process was too complicated for us to complete as a class, which is why I recommended for students to send a copy of the message to themselves when they submit a draft of their essay. When sharing their essays and other writing with GoogleDocs, and most of the other document-sharing programs, students are able to send a copy of the document to themselves, which will confirm the delivery of the document and provide students with an easily accessible version of their submission. In the future, I will limit the methods that I require students to communicate with me during the semester as well as the tools that I require students to use.

In several of the texts covered in the Literature review, many scholars noted that teaching New Literacy Skills requires more than simply changing the delivery of a class, but requires a new mindset and approach to teaching writing altogether. One of the issues from the CCCC's report on Best Practices for OWI regarding Pedagogy was migrating traditional face-to-face writing pedagogies to the online setting—both fully online and hybrid"(CCCC Committee for Best Practices in OWI, 2011, p.7). In the instructor survey in Phase 2, Questions #2, 5, 6,7,and 9 referenced the instructor' pedagogical perspectives on teaching in an OWI environment, as opposed to teaching in a traditional face-to-face classroom. The instructors' responses are compiled and presented in Table 20 below.

New Literacy Skills as Outcomes	
N=39	
First-year Program	9
Writing Program	3
Personal Pedagogy	20
I do not teach New Literacy Skills	3
I am not familiar with New Literacy Skills	6

Table 20: New Literacy Skills as course outcomes or personal pedagogy

To ensure that the results of the survey were consistent and comparable to the first-year writing instructors at Wilberforce University, I asked the instructors at other HBCUs about the courses and programs in which they teach New Literacy Skills. The majority of the instructors responded that they taught these skills in the First-year Program, as shown in Table 21 below.

Courses and Programs	
N=32	
First-year Program	21
College Writing Program	11
Writing Across the Curriculum	5
Other (Open-ended response) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific course or program: 1 All writing classes: 3 Professional/Technical Writing: 4 Basic Writing: 1 Writing for the Web/Media-based Writing: 1 Honor's Program: 1 Literature-based Courses (digital humanities): 1 	12

Table 21: Classes and Programs to teach NLS

Other instructors responded with the following comment: “While there is no specific course taught that is titled New Literacy Skills, various components of what is taught in the composition classroom entails these skills, especially the use of technology to get written assignment done or to complete multi-media projects that are later presented.” Several of the students who participated in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of this study suggested that it would be fairer to students if the university would:

Be consistent (if one instructor uses a particular tool,
technology, skill, all of the instructors who teach that class
should use it (roommate, boyfriend/girlfriend/other may have the
same class...able to work together when consistent
materials)(Student Respondent)

The instructors responded that they taught a range of skills in the first-year writing courses, as shown in Table 22 below.

Specific New Literacy Skills	
N=31 ¹	
Blogging	15
Website Creation	10
Reading Digital Texts	26
Social Networking Sites (Facebook/Twitter/LinkedIn)	11
Internet Research	31
Webquests	4
Podcasting/Videocasting	10

¹ This question allowed respondents to select more than one answer. Several respondents chose a number of options in their response, which is why the number of responses is greater than the number of respondents.

Photo Sharing/Editing	7
Digital Narratives	11
Media Remixes	1
Media Mashups	0
Digital Portfolios	11
Writing Fan Fiction	1
Commenting on Fan Fiction	1
Discussion Forums	19
Discussion Forums/Threaded Discussions	19
Creating Videos	6
Virtual Field Trips	2
Digital Document Sharing (GoogleDocs)	10
Other (please specify): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific assignment/assignments vary from term-to-term 	1

Table 22: Specific New Literacy Skills

One instructor responded with the following statement regarding students in his/her first-year writing course:

“My students certainly use New Literacy skills frequently in their work for my writing courses. When they get to me, their familiarity with digital composition, research, and communication is quite sophisticated, but their writing typically need much work”(Faculty Respondent)

The majority of the instructors responded that they use a range of methods of course delivery to teach New Literacy Skills, as shown in Table 23 below.

Methods of Course Delivery	
N=31	
Answer Options	Response Count
Wholly Online	6
Hybrid (Part face-to-face/part online)	13
Wholly Ground (face-to-face)	15
Technology Enhanced (ground with technology)	16
Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online Composition offered during the Summer term 	2

Table 23: Course delivery methods

One instructor responded with the following statement regarding the tools and technologies to teach New Literacy Skills: “Fewer than half of my students have their own computers, and few still are fully computer literate. Further, the college bandwidth is insufficient, and office computers are more than five years old. “This is a common problem with private HBCUs, one with which I am intimately familiar. When I started to incorporate web technology and media into my classes for the pilot study, I experienced the same problem. For example, I would send students links to YouTube videos to write a response for one of their weekly assignments. Less than half of the students submitted their response for that week, because the students were not able to view the video on campus, because the campus’ insufficient bandwidth, combined with outdated computers, did not allow students to stream the videos.

The students’ fears and distrust were not without merit, as we experienced several breaks in communication throughout the semester during the pilot study, such as technological glitches, limitations to the technology, and failed messages that contained students’ essays throughout the semester. Several students emailed their drafts to my institutional email address. I was not looking for the drafts in my institutional mailbox, so at times; I would not return their essays for

up to two weeks after they submitted their draft. Limitations to the technology and short-sightedness on my part caused additional woes throughout the semester. I set up the course blogs and organized the blogs to enable students to post their drafts as *Comments* to the specific sections of the blog. For example, the first essay that I required students to write was a descriptive narrative; I posted the description and requirements for the essay as a page on the blog, and I intended students to be able to view sample essays, and post their drafts as *Comments* to the descriptive narrative page on the blog. Unfortunately, I did not test the limits of the *Comments* function. As I quickly discovered, or the students discovered for me, the character limit in the Comments box was 4,096 characters; the average essay assigned was 700 – 1,500 words, so the few students who were able to post their drafts as comments to the blog did not meet the word-length requirement of the assignment. The fact that their essays were too long to post to the blog was a relief for many students, as they did not mind having their journal posts available and open for review, but they wanted to keep their essays private, accessible only to me and another student assigned to a small group at the beginning of the semester.

These courses and programs are particularly relevant and useful when students are not able or willing to be location-bound to the physical campus; many of my students are from densely-populated urban areas, such as Detroit, MI, Chicago, IL, New York, NY and Los Angeles, CA. The rural setting of the physical campus at Wilberforce has been an ongoing challenge for many students. In addition, the online courses and programs will be useful to students who are not able to travel to the campus for sixteen weeks at a time. During the pilot study, I had several students who needed to leave the campus unexpectedly for several weeks. Several students experienced personal tragedies, from the deaths of the parents, injuries from near-fatal car accidents (one of which happened in front of the campus), complications from difficult pregnancies, and serious illnesses. One student from the pilot study, “Janicia,” commented that “having a blog is what helped me through this class the most. I liked being able

to participate in the class and interact with the class even when I couldn't be in the class. She was able to finish the class because of the online interaction and the ability to submit her assignments online, as she needed to leave campus for several weeks to make funeral arrangements and administrated her mother's estate and affairs.

Several students who participated in the pilot study were able to complete the class successfully after leaving the campus for professional reasons: several students received offers for internships, contracts, and full-time positions before the end of the term. One student, Jermel from Los Angeles, was a performing artist who had several performances booked before he planned to attend college. If he did not perform on those dates, he would be sued for a breach of contract; if he left the campus to perform, he would likely fail his classes....several of my students were faced with similar conundrums, and were able to leave the campus for valid personal and professional reasons, and finish their classes successfully because of the ability to participate in the class and submit their assignments online.

I surveyed the writing instructors at other small, private HBCUs regarding their pedagogy, particularly how their pedagogy changes, when teaching a hybrid or online class, as opposed to teaching a ground class. Their responses are compiled and presented in Table 24 below.

Difference in Instructors' Pedagogy N=22 (Open-ended question)	
	Response Count
No difference/N/A	2
More student engagement/individual interaction	2
Less student engagement/individual interaction	1
More facilitating course assignments/discussions	2
More traditional teaching methods, just online	4

More freedom, more relaxed than face-to-face class	2
Spend more time grading	4
More group work, responses are targeted towards the group project	2
More direct written instructions and communication	1
Faster pace/accelerated	2

Table 24: Pedagogy when teaching a hybrid or online class

A common myth regarding teaching hybrid and online writing classes is that the online delivery method is less time-consuming than teaching in the traditional ground class. A common concern for many instructors when they teach online is the feeling of being “chained to the computer.” Instructors reported that they needed to communicate with their online students significantly more frequently than they did in a traditional ground class. One instructor noted”

“I have three online classes this semester with approximately 65 students (they are dropping out from the initial enrollment of 75). I never get finished grading; I just reach a saturation point and stop!”(Faculty Respondent)

“I haven't taught completely online, but in hybrid classes, I'm much more hands-off and informal, and make much more effort to be social and sociable. This is very important to the success of these classes because so much of the class takes place in writing. Because they are writing so much, and writing to each other, knowledge gets created from the ground-up, and I have to allow that to happen as organically as possible. Being social and sociable gives them a level of comfort with taking control”(Faculty Respondent)

Several of the students in the pilot study implied a sense of self-responsibility. A common recommendation that students made to other students on the course blog, was to “ask for help if you need it, and ask questions if you don’t understand something.” This recommendation was especially prevalent from students enrolled in the ENGL 112 course who were my former students in the ENGL 111 course.

Findings and Responses: Research Question Number 3

Regarding the last research question, “What tools and technologies are instructors at small, private HBCUs using to teach New Literacy skills? Are these tools primarily proprietary, open-source, or a combination of open-source and proprietary tools? ,” the instructors responded that they use a broad range of tools and technologies to teach and assess New Literacy Skills.

Tools and Technologies

Regarding tools and technologies that instructors must have to effectively teach New Literacy Skills in question 15, of the thirty instructors who responded to question 15; eleven instructors indicated that they need an instructor’s computer, high-speed Internet access , preferably Wi-Fi, so they can connect their own devices without being connected to network (even slower than Wi-Fi), and a projector. Common responses from the instructors are compiled and presented in Table 25 below².

Tools and Technologies	
N=29	
Google Tools (Scholar, Books, Documents, Sites, HangOut)	9

² This question allowed respondents to select more than one answer. Several respondents chose a number of options in their response, which is why the number of responses is greater than the number of respondents.

Basic Internet-Web Browsers	5
Learning Management System (Blackboard, Desire2Learn, WebCT, Angel, Moodle, Wimba)	7
Online Grade book	2
Document Sharing/Dropbox	3
Blogs / Blogging Tools	4
Wikis	4
Cloud Computing	1
Library Database/Library Tools	2
Web Tools/Web Content Tools (HTML,XML,DreamWeaver, FrontPage)	2
Microsoft Office/OpenOffice Tools	3
SMART Classrooms	3
YouTube	6
Flickr	3
Audio recording/editing tools	2
Video recording/editing tools	3
Video conferencing tools	4
Photo editing tools	2
Social Media tools	1
Digital cameras	1
iPads	2
iPods	3
Instant Messaging	1
Whatever free tools are available	2

Table 25: Tools and Technologies

One instructor mentioned, however, “because of limited access to technology, teaching New Literacy Skills is always already contingent and improvisational.” As several other instructors have indicated, limited access to technology is an ever-present issue on campus. The instructor’s comments and responses are compiled and presented in Table 26 below.

Class Time Dedicated to Teaching Tools or Technologies N=30	
	Response Count
0-20%	9
20%-30%	16
30%-50%	3
50%-60%	2
60%-75%	0
75%-85%	0
85%-100%	0

Table 26: Percentage of class time spent on teaching tools

One strategy to promote reflective learning is for instructors to create discussion board forums, journal responses, or other writing assignments that relate to students’ experiences, and provide a way in which students can relate their experiences to the course objectives. Along with clearly stated course objectives, assignments, and learning outcomes, instructors can integrate assignments and tasks that allow for exploration, problem solving, and self-directed learning into the course to address students’ need for independent learning. One of the last questions on the Instructor survey asked instructors to describe the activities that Twenty-six instructors responded to this question, as illustrated in Figure 3 below.

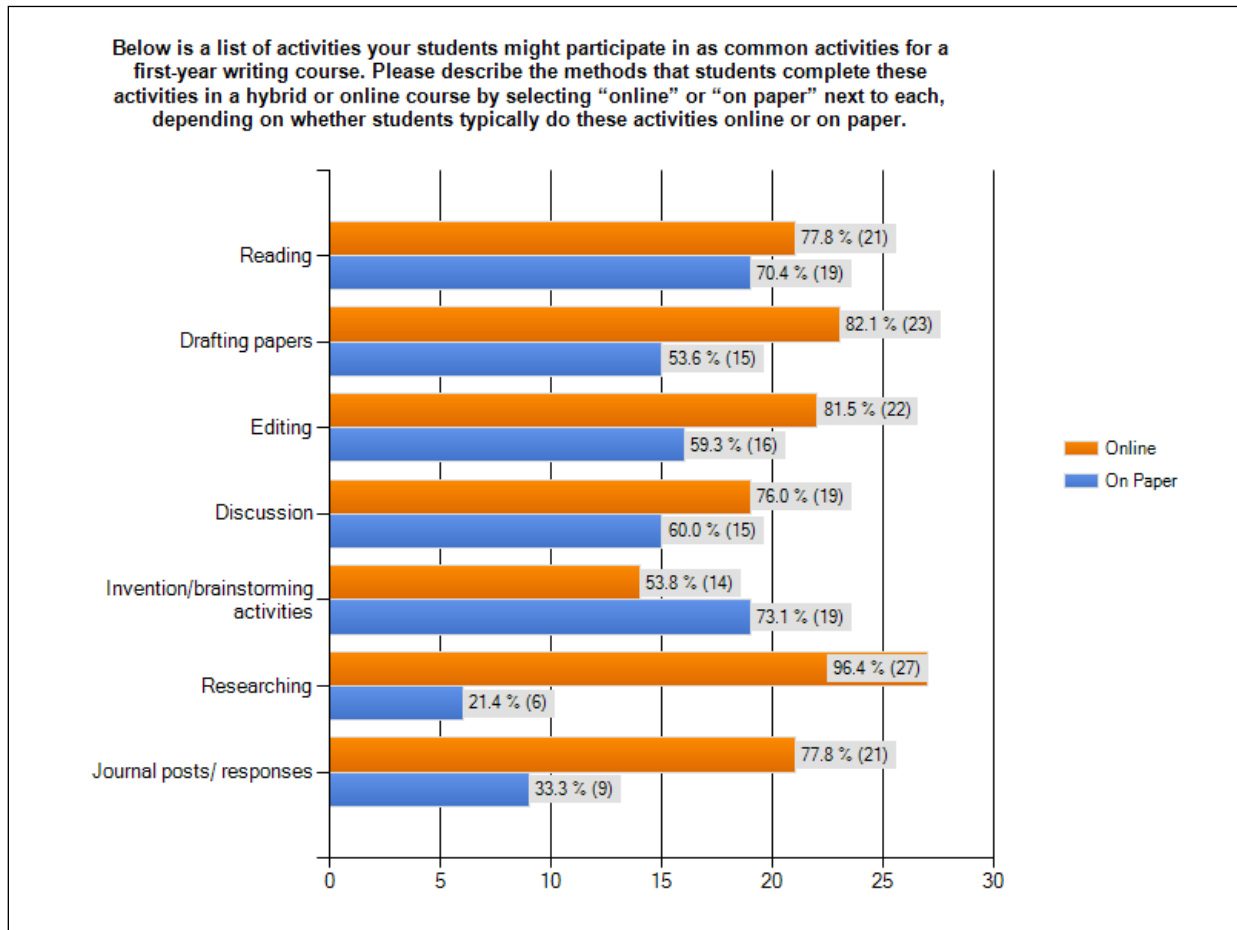


Figure 3: Classroom Activities to Teach NLS

Social Media Tools

FYC instructors should take care to introduce technology in context, and focus on technology as an enhancement to the writing process, and not a replacement for developing college-level writing. In online learning environments, students write substantially more than in face-to-face courses. Instructors should not be tempted to turn their FYC writing class into a computer literacy class; they should maintain their focus on the writing and teach the technology as a tool to produce the writing, which is ultimately, what students need to know and will be graded on. The instructor's focus should be on teaching transferable principles, instead of targeting a particular tool or technology, and be cautious not to incorporate technology just the

technology's sake. For example, instead of teaching students how to upload an MS Word document to GoogleDocuments, cover the general principles of uploading a Rich Text Format (RTF) document to a document sharing application.

In helping students to transition to college life, instructors should also keep their boundaries in mind, particularly in their electronic communication with students. Overall, students want to keep their social life and their academic work separate; they don't want to use a tool that they use for fun with their friends to do their schoolwork. Student may consider the invitation or requirement to join their social network as an intrusion into their private online spaces, particularly when communicating using with their instructor is a class requirement...it's what some researchers call the "Creepy Treehouse" effect. In the field of educational technology a creepy treehouse is an institutionally controlled technology/tool that emulates or mimics pre-existing technologies or tools that may already be in use by the learners, or by learners' peer groups. Though such systems may be seen as innovative or problem-solving to the institution, they may repulse some users who see them as infringement on the sanctity of their peer groups, or as having the potential for institutional violations of their privacy, liberty, ownership, or creativity. Some users may simply object to the influence of the institution (Stein, 2008).

Sending "friend requests" to all of the students on Facebook seems like a great way to engage students on their own comfort level, however, to avoid the "creepy treehouse effect, faculty should set up a separate Facebook/Twitter account specifically for class to promote targeted traffic (chat with other classmates, pictures, status updates, questions from other students. This action will protect students' privacy as well instructor's privacy, and promote a professional distance between the instructor, as a representative of the institution, and the students. It is obvious that students know how to use Facebook; I often catch students chatting with their friends on Facebook's Instant Messaging in the SMART classroom when they should

be drafting their essays. Incorporating free social media tools, such as Facebook/Twitter into the curriculum may prove to be troublesome for both students and the instructor.

To ensure that the course is usable for students that may be unfamiliar with the course and the technologies used, a good practice is to have an unfamiliar user test the course to make sure that the course design is usable and effective. As with any user-centered technology, the course should be tested before the user, first-year students are required to use it. After the course begins, students will have to navigate the course independently when they begin the course without the instructor's assistance or intervention. Having a "test-student" navigate the course will provide a better indication of the pain points that students may experience when they begin the course, so the instructor can clarify those areas in the course before it is released to the students.

Learning Management Systems and Content Management Systems

Beyond the common social media tools that many instructors used, I wanted to learn more about the open-source tools that instructors use for the Learning Management Systems (LMS) or Content Management Systems (CMS). The instructor's responses are compiled and presented below in Table 27.

Open source Learning Management Systems (LMS)/Content Management Systems (CMS)	
Moodle.com: Learning Management System/Content Management System	www.moodle.com
OpenClass: Pearson Free Learning Management System	http://www.pearsonlearningsolutions.com/open-class/
Coursesites: Blackboard LMS (Free version)	http://www.coursesites.com
OLAT: Web-based online learning and training LMS (Web 2.0)	http://www.olat.org/website/en/html/index.html
Open Elms: open-source E-LMS designed for business	http://www.openelms.org/
Joomla: content management system for publishing	http://www.joomla.org/

content on the web and intranet	
Sakai Free LMS for research collaboration, and ePortfolios	http://sakaiproject.org/
CourseKit: free course management system	http://coursekit.com
Engrade: free online grade book/course management system	www.engage.com
GradebookPortal: free online grade book	http://gradebookportal.com
iGradeplus: Online grade book	https://www.iggradeplus.com/

Table 27: Open Source LMS/CMS

Collaboration Tools

To encourage true literacy, instructors must learn to collaborate and participate in problem-based learning; instructors must incorporate student's suggestions/recommendations into lessons, engage students in decision-making to encourage students to become stakeholders in their learning, and become active participants in the community of scholars. The instructors indicated that they used a broad range of tools for students to collaborate in their online and hybrid classes. The most common tools and technologies from the instructor survey are compiled and presented below in Table 28.

Collaboration Tools	
GoogleApps for Education, A free suite of hosted email and collaboration applications exclusively for schools and universities	www.google.com/a/edu/
Intervarsity Blogs and discussion forums/online conversations,	http://intervarsity.com/
Worpress.com: Free blogging tool	http://wordpress.com/
Blogger.com/blogspot.com : blogging tool sponsored by Google	www.blogger.com ; www.blogspot.com
PBworks: Collaborative learning environment (wiki/document-sharing)	www.pbworks.com
Doodle.com :free online scheduling tool	http://doodle.com/
Youtube.com: free online video tool	www.youtube.com
Pintrest.com ,online pinboard, visual collections	http://pinterest.com

(requires a Face book or Twitter account)	
Dropbox.com, desktop to online document sharing tool	www.dropbox.com
Skype: free online video conferencing tool	www.skype.com
Oovoo, free video chat tool, chat with up to 12 people at once (alternative to Skype)	http://www.oovoo.com/home.aspx

Table 28: Open Source Collaboration Tools

Many students who participated in the pilot study remarked that they enjoyed being able to access and review course materials at any time, without the added responsibility of carrying additional papers for the class, as Tamara noted” “I like how this class is mostly online. . . it makes assignments a lot easier. The fact that the syllabus, directions, and help is always there at your fingertips made assignments a lot easier.” Travis also noted that he enjoyed the convenience of completing the work online, and noted that he has changed his attitude towards writing with a computer. He stated, “I have learned how to be a little more advanced with computers, I used to not like doing things on the computer but this class helped me to get over the dislike of working with computers. I enjoyed the time that you took out, for us students because at times writing papers could be very challenging to us.” Marcus supported the idea of community and noted how the online discussion supports the class discussion involves students in the class, “the group was good because we all got to help out one another to complete a project and most of all the online discussion got all of us involved in wonderful discussions on these different blog topics.”

Some students noted their experience and continued anxiety toward submitting their assignments electronically, as Marvin noted, “Online communication is difficult when students are not used to it.” Students can trace the time and date that they handed a printed paper to me; they cannot do the same when a paper is submitted electronically and fear that it may be “lost in cyberspace,” as Terrance noted that “I didn't enjoy the online work. I think turning in papers are better because computer work can be easily lost, but paper work can be printed just in case.”

Darius stated” the online activities were very interesting and being in the lab enabled us to be more involved in the class rather than just sitting in a boring class.” If possible, all classes should meet in a computer lab or technology-equipped classroom so students are able to interact with the technology as they learn. As I noted earlier, access to the technology outside of the classroom can be a challenge, particularly when students do not own their own computers. Dominique noted, in his reflection “

I disliked the journal post we have to make every day on the blog even though it helps us feel comfortable with writing and expressing how we feel on the topic, I guess this program was designed to see how far we have come from when we first started not writing enough sentences and completing our thoughts. I don't like how many students in the class because I want to share the knowledge I learned with others like other student friend family and even friendly people I don't even know that also helps with how you present orally in class by having open conversations with other people. I don't like how my work [sic] don't get graded because of a variety of people trying to all send emails of assignments in all at once and that causes the teacher to look over it or it don't get received because of technical difficulties (Student Respondent).

I recommend for instructors to assign a small-group project at the beginning of the semester for each student, or small group, to demonstrate a function of the technology to the class, particularly as students are learning to use the technology in the first few weeks of the semester. Most of the LMS/CMS are well-suited for collaborative learning, which are common assignments for OWI to establish a sense of community for students who may need to work

remotely. Discussion forums, wikis, blogs, mash-ups, and other media projects are good assignments to promote collaborative learning within the class. Make the benefit of collaboration explicitly clear to ease resistance. Students will resist, oftentimes, because they have had a negative experience with the collaborative assignment, particularly when the entire group is assignment the same grade, even if and when all members of the group did not commit the same level of effort for their grade.

During the pilot study, a common recommendation that students made in their blog reflections was to maintain consistency across all sections of the first-year writing. Throughout the term, several students complained that they wished their other instructors would use Engrade so they would always know their grades and would not have to wait to see their instructor to submit their assignments or know their grades. Eleven students who participated in the pilot study were enrolled in other first-year writing classes, such as College Reading and other lower-level writing classes during this semester. Five of the students, enrolled in other lower-level writing courses, recommended for all instructors who teach first-year writing courses to use the same technologies, as they enjoyed the ability to access the course calendar, announcements, and electronic comments on their essays. Using the same grade book, and system for keeping records will be useful for students during the first few weeks of the semester when students are finalizing their schedules, particularly during the add/drop period during the first two weeks of the semester. I agree that student should have the option of whether or not to enroll in hybrid section of first-year writing, as students with low levels of alphabetic and digital literacy skills may feel intimidated by the technology requirements and become overwhelmed with the layering of the technology on top of the writing skills that they must procure and demonstrate by the end of the course.

Media Production Tools

The instructors indicated that they used a broad range of tools to produce and publish media content, tools to produce and deliver content to their students, and as tools for the students to produce multi-modal projects to demonstrate their mastery of New Literacy Skills. The most common tools and technologies from the instructor survey are compiled and presented below in Table 29.

Media/Production Tools	
Audacity.com: (free sound editor and recording software):	www.audacity.com
Prezi : (for presentations/games/PSAs):	http://prezi.com/
Screencast.com: free screencasting tool	www.screencast.com
Screenr.com: free screencasting tool	www.screenr.com

Table 29: Open Source Media Production Tools

Overall Analysis of Findings

Based on my experiences teaching at Wilberforce University, I devised the following conclusions regarding my research questions. Based on the instructor responses from Phase 2 of this study, other first-year writing instructors, at small, private HBCUs, are teaching New Literacy skills in their Composition classes, but they are doing so quietly; without press releases, advertising, and in many cases, funding from their institutions. In many cases, the instructors were assigned a hybrid or online course that they were not prepared or trained to teach. On the other hand, there are many faculty members teaching at HBCUs who are teaching New Literacy Skills as a result of their own pedagogy. These instructors incorporate the technology to teach New Literacy Skills as a tool to teach the skills, but teaching writing is their primary focus. Many of the instructors believed that students already possessed strong New Literacy Skills, but have a difficult time demonstrating those skills in their academic writing. Most of the instructors

surveyed indicated that they teach New Literacy Skills as part of their commitment to teaching their students, so they have the skills, or at least be familiar with, the 21st Century skills that they will need to be adequately prepared to work after they complete their undergraduate degrees.

Based on the survey responses from the instructors in Phase 2, first-year writing instructors are teaching a broad range of New Literacy Skills, and often combine the methods of writing and assessment to teach several combinations of New Literacy Skills. For many instructors, except the two writing instructors at Wilberforce surveyed in Phase 2, New Literacy Skills are not a required course outcome for the first-year writing courses, but instructors teach those skills as part of their personal pedagogy, and are not required to teach those skills unless they are assigned to teach a hybrid or online section of their first-year writing course. As a common theme, the instructors used “whatever technology is available.” Access to the technology is inconsistent, and in many cases, unpredictable, particularly when using free, open-source tools. Most of the instructors who participated in the survey indicated that they were used to “making bricks without straw” in their classroom, using the technology, tools, and resources that are available, which may change from semester –to-semester, or class-to-class.

When the instructors lacked the tools and technology that they want to teach specific skills related to their pedagogy, they simply improvised to use the technology and tools that they have available. They recognized the need to make the “bricks” even when their institutions did not provide the “straw” that they needed. When the instructors were not able to access a proprietary product, such as MS PowerPoint, they often downloaded an open-source product that accomplishes the same goal, such as Prezi or Impress, an open-source presentation product provided by OpenOffice.org. Regarding open-source tools; there are literally hundreds of free tools, particularly that relate to education and learning. The key is to find the right tool to teach and assess the right skill. This action may take some time, but will almost certainly require some

effort, trial and error, as “one size does not fit all” when it comes to incorporating tools and technologies into ones pedagogy.

Suggestions for Future Research

The present PAR study was conducted at a small, private HBCU that is still in its developmental stages of providing wholly online, hybrid, and technology-enabled courses for students in General Studies classes. The results of this study may not be generalized beyond the specific population from which the sample was drawn, due to the unique sample available for this study. The focus of this research was delimited specifically to Wilberforce University; none of the classes that were observed or included in the study were conducted wholly online, as Wilberforce did not offer any online writing courses at the time of the study. Although the results of the study may not be generalized to a broad scope of scholarship, the study provides a starting point for instructors and administrators at small, private colleges, HBCUs and PWIs, to investigate tools and technologies within their curriculum without having access to funding to purchase proprietary licenses for common technologies. An immediate and simple way to replicate the study would be to replicate the study within a small, private college with an interest in implementing a campus or program-wide initiative implementing open-source tools and technologies, such as GoogleApps for Education.

To broaden the applicability of the results to a wider context, I recommend that the study be replicated in a larger context, such as a public HBCU or other Minority Serving Institution (MSI), a larger mainstream university that has strong minority-serving resources, a for-profit university, because many of the for-profit universities draw the same types of students as the HBCU: first-generation college students, in need of generous financial aid, overall, under-prepared for college-level academic work. Furthermore, a quantitative, longitudinal study would provide a model for other small, private colleges and universities to implement open-sourcetools

and track those students from their first online/hybrid course through graduation or tracking students who “stopped-out” and were able to complete their degree through online or hybrid classes and programs.

The focus of this study was to determine and compile a set of best practices, as perceived by the instructors and student within the small, private HBCU community, for implementing open-source tools into hybrid writing courses. It would be valuable to complete a similar study focusing on hybrid or online curriculums within the context of HBCUs and other MSI, which are wholly online or hybrid, combining elements of face-to-face and online instruction. The results of this study would be especially useful and applicable to other colleges and universities if a group of those students were second-language learners with low levels of alphabetic literacy in English. Final results of this study, being taught in a wholly online format, will be applicable to a wider audience. The focus of this study was further delimited to faculty members who have already taught writing online and were currently using online technologies to teach their ground classes. The responses were self-reported by the students and faculty who participated in the study; the study relied on participants to report truthfully and accurately. The researcher’s personal, although unintentional; bias may influence the study, particularly for the student responses from the pilot study, as I was both the researcher as well as the students’ instructor. An immediate application and replication of this study may be completed by another colleague at Wilberforce, where the researcher is not a faculty member, but an advisor for the First-Year program or Scholars’ program.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

After more than 150 years, Wilberforce University and other private HBCUs like it are still making bricks without straw, as they provide an education to African-Americans and students of all races. In the history of the university, this campus has closed its doors only once for more than the summer break. As an institution, we have survived a host of tragedies, from natural disasters to buildings being burned down by insurgents. As Maya Angelou's poem insists, "still we rise." The face of our challenges, as an institution, is changing rapidly. Our target student, the first-generation college student who is under-prepared for the college curriculum, has many more options that they had in the past. At the time when I enrolled in Sinclair Community College, in 1992, Sinclair Community College did not offer any online courses; the poorly constructed telecourses were the closest option that I could hope for; since I had no idea of how to be a self-directed learner, I had no hope of passing those classes. Today, my students face a greater challenge; they are also grossly under-prepared for college; however, the HBUCS are that would have competed for their tuition dollars are now in direct competition with career colleges and for-profit colleges, who offer the same nurturing environment as the HBCU, just without the family atmosphere and focus on history. These students are being bombarded with media messages, commercials, pop-up ads on their social networking sites and radio ads that promise them a better future with an education, all without having to leave their home or interrupting their lives.

Next Steps

Wilberforce University, and many other small, private colleges like it, cannot continue to grow, evolve, and thrive by holding onto the history of the institution without promoting the current relevance and need for the small, private HBCU; reminiscing on the greatness of the past, and not presenting themselves as a viable option for their current and future students. Without students, there can be no university; the legacy of our beloved university will be nothing more than a collection of fond memories if we continue to lose students at the same alarming rate without making provisions to recapture these students or replace them with new students.

As an institution, Wilberforce University has a long history of self-reliance, making our way through semester after semester, year after year, for more than 150 years, with little state-funded support. We have been making our own “bricks” for some time. The challenges that we face now, from negative publicity to threatening financial constraints, are just as trying as the insurmountable challenges that we have faced and overcome in the past. As an institution, we could set the standard for other small, private HBCUs that are in the same condition and position as Wilberforce University: in need of “bricks,” teaching materials, licensed software, and funding to build up our infrastructure, without the “straw,” raw materials, trained staff and faculty members, strong and secure endowments, and financial support. I recommend implementing a short list of initiatives that will help Wilberforce University create a model for other small, private colleges to attract and retain students and increase enrollment.

Instructors, who have been challenged to make the “bricks” of teaching New Literacy Skills without the “straw” of common technologies, should begin by preparing our community of scholars to succeed in digital environments. As a community, we should begin by offering a series of training workshops to all administrators, faculty and staff members, and students, providing them with training on implementing open-source tools and technologies into their

classes. Attendees should receive certificates of completion and credit for these workshops as part of the Professional Development series. Once the administrators, faculty and staff members are prepared, the faculty should be able to implement elements of distance learning into their first-year courses, both writing-intensive and general requirement classes, eventually offering several sections of online and hybrid classes for general electives and required courses.

Next, as a community, we should publically declare the start of our move to a digitally literate community, and we involve the entire community within the university to participate and contribute to a digital literacy initiative. As part of this initiative, we will organize a campus-wide focus group on New Literacy Skills, which will include entire community of scholars at Wilberforce University: administrators, faculty and staff, and students. This focus group will collectively define “Literacy,” and agree upon critical skills that we, as a community, must have to be acceptably proficient as members of our own community and productive citizens in a 21st century economy. To involve the university’s alumni into this initiative, I recommend inviting all interested alumni to attend the Presidents’ opening convocation, and allowing the alumni to participate using Skype or any of the other open-source conferencing products.

Students should have the option of taking courses that will fulfill their degree requirements, without having to attend traditional ground classes to earn their degree. We should begin to offer traditional and non-traditional students with more diverse options to complete their degree. There are a few ways in which we could accomplish this goal. As one option, we could design courses for online or hybrid delivery, using Engrade or one of the other open-source learning management systems, where students may take part of their classes in the traditional ground classroom, and part of their classes online. The percentages of online and ground classes should be voted on at a Faculty Senate meeting, with administrator and student representation. As an additional option, we could partner with a for-profit institution, such as Capella University,

Walden University, or Liberty University, that does not have a local campus in the areas, and offer online courses by becoming a member of the EduVenture Partners.

As a community, we should start to reach out to reclaim students who have “stopped-out,” or left the university. Currently, the Office of Development sponsors several “phone-a-thons,” where the students, faculty, staff, and administrators call a list of active donors to solicit donations. I recommend for the university to hold a phone-a-thon to reclaim students who have left the university, particularly those who are location-bound, and offer them an opportunity to return to the university to complete their degree by taking online or hybrid courses.

Final Reflections

Many minority students possess low levels of literacy skills, including digital literacy, and are often under-prepared for college; the small private HBCU is a good choice for under-prepared students because of the smaller classes, small student-teacher ratio, and personal attention that students often receive at small HBCUs; however, the universities must prepare students and prepare and equip faculty with the skills and resources they need to teach students the literacy skills, from Alphabetic Literacy to New Literacy Skills, that they need to advance, both in their studies as well as their professions after graduation. More African-American students are attending these small, private universities as a conscious choice; a subject of research that Composition scholars must explore further. On the first survey, I asked students: “*Why did you choose to attend Wilberforce University?*” Twenty students indicated that history and tradition were their primary reasons for choosing to attend the University.

Beyond their ability to participate in the University’s rich history, thirty students indicated that they preferred a small campus over a large campus, citing small class size with more opportunities to interact with their professors. When asked about their experiences at the end of the semester, nineteen of the remaining thirty-four participants reported using the digital

technologies because I required students to use the technologies as part of the course, and not because they preferred to use the digital technologies to submit their assignments.

Through this project, I realized that I am not only teaching my students to write effectively for an academic audience; I assigned myself the bigger job of teaching them to use the technology that I selected and to use it correctly, effectively, and efficiently; essence, I was able to make those “bricks without the straw.” The task of teaching and assessing digital literacy skills for first-year students can be daunting at best, especially without the financial support to provide access and training to use commercial or proprietary Learning Management Systems, as I was used to teaching students digital literacy skills through this medium; however, I was able to provide students with foundational skills as applied principles of digital literacy, so they may be able to apply those skills to use commercial digital technologies effectively. Our students, at small private HBCUs, need more than just access to digital technology; they also need dedicated space and opportunity to become more than users of the technology to prevent them from becoming victims of technical determinism, as Stuart Selber (2004) suggested. We, as writing instructors, should continue to use computers and digital technologies without falling victim to technical determinism, which will result in either a false hope or dependence on the technology that will disappoint users because of unavoidable technical progress; or “false hopelessness,” which users will experience as a result of losing the sense of humanity in a world that is governed by technology. I doubt that access is enough, as those who are without access need more than mere access; they need skills training, education, and opportunities to use it effectively, and they need space to practice and challenges to make critical decisions about the technology.

Giving students a wide range of options for communication and submission of assignments promotes higher-order thinking and strengthens critical literacy skills; however, multiple options for delivery and submission of their final projects, particularly an electronic portfolio with a high point value, at the end of the semester, may prove to be overwhelming for

the instructor, and cause additional anxiety for the students if their instructor does not respond in a timely manner.

Education is best experienced within a community of scholars where competent professionals are actively and cooperatively involved with creating, providing, and improving the instructional program, promoting a learning environment for both faculty and students that is dynamic and interactive, regardless of the setting in which it occurs. Instructional programs leading to degrees must operate with integrity and demonstrate a culture that is organized around substantive and coherent curricula which defines expected learning outcomes. As such an institution, a community of scholars, we must also accept the obligation to address student needs related to, and to provide the resources necessary for, their academic success. As students go forth to obtain additional degrees, training, and positions, they bear the name and reputation of Wilberforce University, so then, we, as an institution and community, are responsible for the education provided in our name.

As a community, we must undertake the assessment and improvement of the quality and availability of the students' education, regardless of their physical location or technological competence, we must also emphasize and empower the participants within our community to promote and assess students' learning, be transparent in our assessment, and voluntarily subject ourselves to peer review (Higher Learning Commission / NCA, 2005, p.52). Although the focus of this study is teaching and assessing students' digital literacy skills, with an emphasis on students' responses, instructor response times impact students' perceptions of social presence of their instructor, especially in an online or hybrid class (Instructor immediacy/Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs, North Central Higher Learning Commission, 2005¹). To ease anxiety for both the instructor and students, I recommend that instructors to limit delivery options of electronic portfolios and confirm receipt of the portfolios with an automated message.

I am scheduled to present my findings of this study to the Wilberforce University faculty during our semi-annual faculty institute, to begin Phase 3 of this study. I am going to suggest using a single open-source tool, Engrade, instead of incorporating all three tools: Engrade, the online grade book, a course blog created on Blogger, and GoogleDocuments. I am going to recommend incorporating Engrade because the system is free, easy to use, and growing to be more dynamic with each release. On Engrade, I can do more than simply record students' grades, but I am able to record their attendance, post lessons/lectures, post my discussion forum posts, create flashcards, which will be useful for teaching literacy terms, and post quizzes; all of these features will be beneficial as we search for viable tools to teach students digital literacy skills, and eventually, to offer online sections of first-year writing courses.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Oklahoma State University IRB Approval

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Tuesday, August 23, 2011 Protocol Expires: 8/22/2012

IRB Application No: AS1085

Proposal Title: Making Bricks Without Straw: Teaching Multi-Literacy Skills at a Small, Private HBCU

Reviewed and Processed as: **Modification/Continuation**

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s) **Approved**

Principal Investigator(s):

Robin Evans 5207 Belle Isle Drive Dayton, OH 45439	Ronald Brooks 205 Morrill Stillwater, OK 74078
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Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modifications to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval with the advisor's signature. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB.

☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

Signature: Shelia A. Kennison
Shelia Kennison, Chair, Institutional Review Board

Tuesday, August 23, 2011
Date

Informed Consent Form: Faculty Survey

(Form will be submitted by email to the faculty to introduce the survey)

Investigator: Robin Evans, B.A, M.A, Ph.D. Candidate in English at Oklahoma State University

Dear Professor:

I am a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University, as well as an Assistant Professor at Wilberforce University. I am conducting an IRB-approved study on teaching and assessing new literacy skills in first-year writing courses, using Online Writing Instruction (OWI) delivered in technology-enhanced, hybrid, and wholly online formats for my dissertation. If you currently teach first-year writing at a private HBCU, or have taught first-year writing using online writing instruction methods, please consider participating in this study, or forward this message to your colleagues for their potential participation.

The purpose of this study is to collect information on best practices to teach and assess new literacy skills in first-year writing courses to students at other private HBCUs. I am particularly interested in learning how faculty members teach and assess these skills without having an extensive budget for technology, tools, and training. The first-year program at Wilberforce University is considering offering writing courses using OWI methods; technology-enhanced and hybrid classes, then wholly online writing courses in the summer of next year. This information will be helpful to understand how other faculty members at private HBCUs are teaching and assessing these skills and the tools that they use; in addition, it will be useful information about web-based learning and will help improve online courses at Wilberforce University and other HBCUs.

If you participate, your obligations will be low. You will complete a short, anonymous survey via the Internet that will require approximately 15 minutes of your time, and will be returned to me via Survey Monkey, an online data collection service. If you complete a survey, your responses will be returned to me anonymously. I will not be able to identify your e-mail address, your IP address, or any other information that would inform me as to your identity, or your location. If you choose to inform me of your identity, please contact me at the telephone number or email address below. Your identity will be kept confidential, and used only to compile overall faculty profiles of those instructors who completed the survey and demographic information about your institution.

Completing this survey is voluntary. You may skip questions, and can quit any portion of the research at any time. Please feel free to contact me or my advisor at the telephone numbers and email addresses below.

Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,

Robin L. Evans
revans@wilberforce.edu; professor.r.evans@gmail.com
(937) 708-5644

If you would like to contact my advisor, his contact information is as follows:

Dr. Ronald Brooks
Department of English
First-year Composition
Oklahoma State University
ronald.brooks@okstate.edu
(405) 744-7737



Informed Consent Form: Student Survey

Investigator: Robin Evans, B.A., M.A., Ph.D. Candidate in English at Oklahoma State University

Dear Scholar:

You have received this notice as part of a request for your participation in a research study at Wilberforce University. This study will focus on teaching and assessing new literacy skills in first-year writing courses. This study is open to adult students who are currently enrolled in first-year writing courses at Wilberforce University, including ENGL 111 and ENGL 112. The principal investigator for this study is Robin Evans, a professor in the English department at Wilberforce University as well as a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University. This study will fulfill a partial requirement of her doctoral program. The title of the study is *Making Bricks without Straw: Teaching and Assessing New Literacy Skills at a Small, Private HBCU*.

The case study will focus on teaching and assessing new literacy skills in several sections of first-year writing courses at Wilberforce University, using free and open-sourced tools to digital tools to teach and assess new literacy skills in technology-enhanced writing classes. You will receive three short surveys throughout the semester: at the beginning of the semester, in the middle of the semester, and at end of the semester to analyze your responses.

Your professor will distribute hard copies of all three surveys. Please do not write your name on these surveys, as your responses are anonymous. This form is the only item that will connect your name to this study: after you sign and return this Informed Consent form, Professor Evans will collect all the Informed Consent forms from your professor and store them in a locked cabinet in her office for one year. After that year has lapsed, all Informed Consent forms will be destroyed. All data are required to be collected anonymously and I agree not to use any data retrieved in this study without the students' expressed consent. Your participation in this study is voluntary and your identity will remain unknown to the researcher throughout the study. You may end your participation at any time without penalty or notice, or simply skip any question that you choose not to answer. Refusing to participate, skipping a question, or leaving the study at a later time will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology being used. Each of the three surveys should take no more than 8-10 minutes to complete.

Your individual answers are extremely important to this study and will remain confidential and anonymous. Results of your responses will be compared to the results of other participants, and all data will be reported using the alias that you selected instead of your true identity. In the final report, data will be reported without the inclusion of details that would allow identification of you as an individual. Once the data are compiled and the study completed your responses to the surveys will be printed out in hard copy stored in a locked cabinet in Professor Evans' office, and will be destroyed after one year. There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Although you will not benefit directly from participating in this study, in terms of financial gain or extra credit for this course, you will benefit indirectly by contributing data to support important curricular changes at the university, including implementing digital tools and technologies in all first-year writing classes, as well as upper-level writing intensive classes, exposure and practice in using digital publishing tools, and learning principles of new literacy skills to make informed, critical decisions concerning technology.

By completing this study, you are consenting to participate in this research project and certifying that you are over 18 years. If you are under the age 18, you cannot participate in this study. If you have questions about this research project, you may contact me, Robin Evans, at revans@wilberforce.edu or professor.r.evans@gmail.com. My phone number is 937-708-5644. My advisor at Oklahoma State University's name is Dr. Ronald Brooks. His telephone number (405) 744-7737 and email address is ronald.brooks@okstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form has been given to me.

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____



Appendix B: Instructor Survey

1. How do you define “Literacy,” especially New Literacy skills as they relate to Composition/First-Year Writing?
2. Are New Literacy skills outcomes for your first-year writing program or courses, or part of your personal pedagogy?
 First-year Program Writing Program Personal pedagogy I do not teach
 New Literacy Skills I am not familiar with New Literacy Skills
3. How would describe your college/institution?
 Small Campus Mid-sized Campus Large Campus Urban Campus Rural Campus
 Other
4. What are some hindrances that may prevent you from teaching and assessing New Literacy skills?
 Limited access to technology Administrative roadblocks Comfort level with
 technology (instructor/student) Face-to-face course overload Lack of familiarity
 Other (please explain)
5. Which course(s) or program (s) do you teach New Literacy skills? If you do not teach New Literacy skills, you have completed this survey. Thank you for your participation.
 First-year program College Writing Program Writing Across the Curriculum
 Other
6. Which New Literacy skills do you teach and assess in your first-year writing course? If you teach and assess a combination of literacy skills, please select all of the applicable literacy skills:
 21st Century Literacies Internet Literacies Information Communication
 Technologies (ICT) Literacies Digital Literacies New Media Literacies
 Multiliteracies Information Literacy Computer Literacy Other All of the Above
 None of the Above
7. What assignments or practices do you use to teach New Literacy Skills? Select all examples that apply to your course(s):
 Blogging Website creation Reading digital texts Social networking
 Internet research Webquests Podcasting/Videocasting Photo
 sharing/editing Digital narratives Media remixes Media Mashups
 Digital portfolios Writing Fan Fiction Commenting on Fan Fiction Discussion
 forums Threaded discussions Creating Videos Virtual Field Trips
 Digital document sharing Other (Please specify)

8. What tools and technologies do you use to teach New Literacy skills?
9. How are your courses delivered that teach and assess New Literacy skills?
 Wholly Online Hybrid (part face-to-face/part online) Wholly Ground/Face-to-Face
 Technology-Enhanced Other
10. For those classes that are offered wholly online or hybrid, are these sections distinguished from other sections that are wholly ground, traditional face-to-face sections? How do students identify these courses/sections?
11. For those courses that offered wholly online, or in a hybrid format, what are the prerequisites that a student must complete before beginning the course?
 None Advisor's Recommendation Petition Honor's Program Pre-course assessment Pre-course seminar/orientation Other (Please specify)
12. For those courses that are offered in a hybrid format, where do those classes meet?
 Smart Classroom Technology-enhanced Lecture Hall Computer Lab
 Other (Please specify)
13. How do you teach and assess New Literacy Skills in your course/program?
 Tool/technology proficiency project Pre-test/Post-test Electronic Portfolio
 Other
14. Is there a tool or technology that you must have to teach New Literacy skills effectively? What is it?
15. Did you receive any training before you began teaching your hybrid or wholly online class? If so, how extensive was your training? Did the training focus on online writing instruction (how to teach online), site/tools specific training, or other?
 No training Brief workshop Extensive training
 Online Writing Instruction Technology Training Tool Training Other
16. During the course, how much of your class time do you dedicate to teaching the tools or technology that students use to demonstrate their New Literacy skills?
 0-20% 20%-30% 30%-50% 50%-60% 60%-75% 75%-85% 85%-100%
17. How do you rate your Internet skills, especially finding and evaluating online resources?
 Not at all skilled Somewhat skilled Fairly skilled Very skilled Expert
18. How does your pedagogy differ when teaching the hybrid or online classes, as opposed to your traditional ground classes?
19. Approximately how many hours do you spend online each week for the hybrid or online classes?
 0-10 1-20 21-30 30 or more
20. Below is a list of activities your students might participate in as common activities for a

first-year writing course. Please describe the methods that students complete these activities in a hybrid or online course by typing “online” or “on paper” next to each, depending on whether students typically do these activities online or on paper.

- a. Reading
- b. Drafting papers
- c. Invention/brainstorming activities
- d. Journal posts// responses
- e. Researching
- f. Discussion
- g. Editing
- h. Other

Appendix C: Student Surveys

Survey 1: Pre-instruction Survey

1. Because of the technological nature of this course, you will complete most of your course work using a computer. On what computer do you plan to complete the majority of your course work?
My own computer School computer lab/library Shared laptop Other
2. How comfortable are you with reading and writing electronic texts (using a computer)?
Uncomfortable Somewhat Comfortable Comfortable Very Comfortable
3. Briefly describe your previous experience of writing using a computer– both at home and in school.
4. When you write using a computer for school, what do you normally do with your writing?
Print and edit on paper Print and turn it in Email electronic copy Publish online
Other
5. Have you taken an online course, or taken a writing course using technology and online sources? If so, briefly describe your experience.
6. What are your main reasons for spending time online (at school and at home)?
Online gaming Social Networking (FaceBook/Twitter/other) Blogging/online journal
Downloading music Online research Reading online
texts/GoogleBooks Other
7. How many hours do you spend online each week?
0-10 11-20 21-30 30 or more
8. How do you define “Literacy?” What makes a person literate in today’s society?
9. How do you rate your Internet skills, especially finding and evaluating online resources?
Not at all skilled Somewhat skilled Fairly skilled Very skilled Expert
10. Briefly describe the steps you take when you are writing a paper that requires sources to support your argument. If your first step is to decide on a topic, describe how you decide on a topic, and continue your description of your writing process.

Survey 2: Midterm Survey

1. How comfortable are you with reading and writing electronic texts (using a computer)?
Uncomfortable Somewhat Comfortable Comfortable Very Comfortable
2. How is completing your course work for this class, including homework and journal posts, different than doing homework for other classes?
3. Is completing your course work for this class more challenging than other classes, less challenging, or is there a difference between completing course work for this class and your other classes?
More challenging Less challenging No difference
4. When doing work for this class, do you typically read online when the material is online, or do you print out the online material?
Read online Print out online material Other
5. When you write using a computer for school, what do you normally do with your writing?
Print and edit on paper Print and turn it in Email electronic copy Publish online Other
6. If given the choice, would you prefer to read in print or online? Why?
7. How many hours do you spend online each week?
0-10 11-20 21-30 30 or more
8. How many hours do you spend online each week for this class?
0-10 11-20 21-30 30 or more
9. Below is a list of activities you might participate in as a member of this course. Please describe those which you participate in by typing "online" or "on paper" next to each, depending on whether you typically do these activities online or on paper. If any of these activities is not familiar to you, or if you do not participate in that activity, please leave that space blank.
 - a. Reading
 - b. Drafting papers
 - c. Invention/brainstorming activities
 - d. Journal responses
 - e. Blogging
 - f. Researching

- g. Discussion
- h. Editing
- i. Other

10. Has your participation level in this class increased, decreased, or increased from the beginning of the semester? Please explain the changes or lack of change.

Increased Decreased No Change

Survey 3: Post-Instruction Survey

1. Considering the second half of the semester how was doing course work for this class different than doing homework for other classes?

2. In the second half of the semester, when doing course work for this class, did you typically read online when the material was online?

Read online Print and read on paper

3. Did you print out the online material? In what instances did you read online? In what instances did you print?

4. In the second half of the semester, before posting yourself, did you read the messages already posted on a given topic or assignment? (How often?)

Never A few times Sometimes Most of the time Always

5. How do you define “Literacy?” What makes a person literate in today’s society? Did your answer change from the beginning of the semester? Why?

6. How many hours do you spend online each week?

0-10 11-20 21-30 30 or more

7. How many hours do you spend online each week for this class?

0-10 11-20 21-30 30 or more

8. Try to remember back to your first week in this class. Have your writing, reading, and research skills (technology-related skills) changed throughout the semester? If so, how?

9. Why do you think your skills changed or didn’t change? Do you feel your comfort level with technology has changed over the course of the semester? Why or why not?

10. Below is a list of activities you might participate in as a member of this course. Please describe those which you participate in by typing “online” or “on paper” next to each, depending on whether you typically do these activities online or on paper. If any of these activities is not familiar to you, or if you do not participate in that activity, please leave that space blank.

- a. Reading
- b. Drafting papers
- c. Invention/brainstorming activities
- d. Journal responses
- e. Blogging
- f. Researching
- g. Discussion

h. Editing

i. Other

11. Are you the first person in your immediate family to attend a four-year college or university full-time?
12. At what age did you obtain your own computer?
13. Why did you choose to attend Wilberforce University? Your answer may be brief, but needs to be specific.

Appendix D: Course Proposal: Hybrid ENGL 111/Online ENGL 112

This proposal will be submitted at the Wilberforce University Faculty Senate to be reviewed and voted upon by the Academic Policies Committee at the first Faculty Senate meeting on August 1, 2012. The Academic Policies Committee will evaluate the final course for compliance with all guidelines listed below after the course has been approved, but at least two weeks before it is actually taught. The Academic Policies Committee will communicate its final approval or disapproval to the faculty member and to the appropriate committee.

Department	Course Prefix	Number	Title of Course	Credit
<u>English</u>	<u>ENGL</u>	<u>111</u>	<u>Hybrid Composition I</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>English</u>	<u>ENGL</u>	<u>112</u>	<u>Online Composition II</u>	<u>3</u>

Course Justification

The primary reasons for offering Hybrid ENGL 111 and Online ENGL 112 are that many non-traditional students cannot or find it difficult to attend traditional classes as offered; in addition, because of space limitations, the department sometimes cannot offer enough sections to meet the high demands for these courses, as first-year students have consistently populated the largest numbers of incoming and returning students. Offering online courses as an option to complete these courses (ENGL 111 and ENGL 112) addresses both issues.

These courses will provide an alternative option for students that will deliver the same high quality of content and high degree of interaction afforded through traditional course delivery. Hybrid English 111 and Online ENGL 112 are both designed to enhance reading, writing, and research skills learned in composition courses and to apply those skills to the study of literature. An online version of this course will allow students the same interaction with the literature while increasing communication between peers and the instructor.

Currently, Wilberforce operates on two semesters, Fall and Spring, and is completely closed down for most of the summer. Wilberforce University will benefit as an institution by teaching students principles of New Literacy Skills to adequately prepare them to successfully take classes delivered in a hybrid format or wholly online format. If students are able to enroll and complete classes online, without being location-bound, the institution will be able to recruit students outside of the area, as well as retain students by allowing them to take online classes, within the institution, during academic breaks when students normally enroll in classes at community colleges or other local colleges.

In addition, allowing students to take classes online, throughout the year, will allow them to maintain enrollment while they are completing a Cooperative Education assignment, which will allow students to complete the requirement faster and broaden the opportunities beyond the

summer break without having to physically be present on campus. By allowing students to maintain matriculation, without having to be physically present on campus, Wilberforce University, as well as other small, private universities, will increase their enrollment, as well as increase their graduation and completion rates, as students must “stop out” if they must be absent from the campus for extended periods of time.

The hybrid course (ENGL 111) will resemble the “Step-up/Upward Bound programs, where students will begin the class online during the first week July, continue to “meet” over the summer online, and physically meet on campus, as a class, during the last week of July to give their class presentations face-to-face, or via Skype to approximate face-to-face interaction, in one of the campus SMART classrooms. This week is often reserved as “Freshman Week,” when the incoming freshman students are able to meet one another, obtain housing, and register for classes. The online course (ENGL 112) will be delivered wholly online using the Engrade system, student email, and the course blog.

Proposed Course Syllabus: Hybrid ENGL 111

Catalog Description

The Freshman Writing Program consists of competency-based writing courses designed to teach students writing skills needed to succeed in college and beyond their college education. This course will focus on writing clear, concise, and well-organized compositions. This course will dedicate some attention to writing about Literature and understanding the process of writing. Students will also learn basic research skills and documentation methods, as well as methods to evaluate evidence and other information.

Course Outcomes

By the end of this semester, students will be able to:

- Write well-organized, developed compositions of varying lengths
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of library research with standard references
- Pass the course’s post test
- Use standard grammar and writing techniques
- Demonstrate writing as a mode of thinking
- State a purpose for a composition using a variety of development patterns (narration, definition, description, illustration, comparison and contrast, and causal analysis) in his or her own writing
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the writing process through prewriting, drafting, rewriting, and editing his or her own work
- Express ideas in writing with clarity
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of grammatical conventions, spelling, and punctuation
- Demonstrate analysis of media content and explore how media shape politics, culture, and society

Course Communication

Students will be **required to have access to the Internet** through a Java Script-enabled browser, Netscape Navigator 4.7 or better or Internet Explorer 6.0 or better. AOL is not compatible. In addition, students will need to obtain a web or video camera (usually less than \$20), create a free Skype account: skype.com as well as a free Engrade account at engrade.com.

The student's request to enroll in a course delivered via the Internet suggests his/her familiarity with navigating through a site, using a discussion board and virtual chat, sending email with attachments, submitting materials via a drop box, as well as the ability to format documents in Word regardless of the word processing software available to the student.

Students enrolled in Hybrid ENGL 111 and Online ENGL 112 need to be registered users with University Computing Services. All students have access to the Internet, email, and Microsoft Office in the R E. Stokes Learning Resource Center and in all dormitories. Students should have a working knowledge of Microsoft Word and be able to access resources electronically. Students will access most of their research materials via the Internet through OhioLINK and the Ohio Private Academic Libraries (OPAL) consortium.

Assignment Submission

I am using an online grade book to provide faster access to grades and increase efficiency during draft and response review. Please sign up for a free, secure account on Engrade, the website is <http://www.engrade.com/student-signup>. Your user name/access code will be in the following format: engrade-profevans-1234 (replace "1234" with the last four numbers of your Wilberforce ID number). Your grades will be secure and inaccessible to anyone who does not have access to your ID number. In addition, I am using GoogleDocs to review and comment on all drafts. If you do not have an existing Gmail account, to submit drafts, please create a free account at <http://mail.google.com/mail/signup>. My user name on Gmail is professor.r.evans@gmail.com; my account allows me to participate in live chat with students as well share and review your drafts and other documents.

Communication Procedures

This course requires the following: email for general communication, email for file exchange between student/teacher, small group discussion, whole class group discussion, optional virtual chats, and video chats via Skype. Course assignment file transfer between teacher/student will be handled via email attachment until Engrade's limited file exchange/messaging tool is improved.

Attendance Policy

To maintain compliance with state and federal regulation, through the State of Ohio and the federal Department of Education, Wilberforce University is required to maintain accurate attendance records for all courses. Hybrid and online courses are not exempt from this requirement; however, your participation in these courses will occur in a different manner.

Student "attendance" in hybrid and online courses is defined as active participation in the course as described in each course syllabus. The hybrid ENGL 111 has both synchronous and asynchronous requirements; the online ENGL 112 course does not include a synchronous class requirement, however, students will have the option to communicate via Skype with me and other students in class, throughout the semester, and may submit an e-portfolio at the end of the term. Synchronous (or real time) learning experiences happen at the end of the term and occur at same time for all students in a section. Asynchronous learning experiences happen throughout the course and do not require student participation at a scheduled time.

Regular attendance is a key component to successfully complete this class. To maintain the required attendance for these classes, students must actively participate in a class activity a minimum of 3 calendar days per week for each course of 3-4 credits. Any first-term student, or any student seeking re-entry through the hybrid ENGL 111 or online ENGL 112 course, who does not log into classes within the first seven days of the term will be withdrawn from their classes and their enrollment will be cancelled.

Students who have logged in but are absent from classes 21 consecutive calendar days (excluding scheduled breaks) will be administratively withdrawn from the program. Please be aware that your financial aid is contingent upon the number of hours you are actively enrolled in, so administrative withdrawal from a course will negatively impact your financial aid.

- Attendance is triggered by completing an activity listed on the Assignments tab in Engrade. Simply logging in will not earn credit for attendance.
- Students have a greater chance of successfully completing this class when they actively engage with the class and course material, and actively participate in the class 3 to 5 days a week. If you work ahead, it is still important that you access course material every few days to update your attendance.

Students may appeal to the Dean of Students if they feel an error has been made in their attendance calculation. Plan to log on and mark attendance every few days.

If life is getting in the way, please make sure to alert me immediately if you have a problem that might keep you from submitting work on time (work schedule issues, family emergency, illness, death in the family, etc.) In addition, you should alert your division dean and advisor, even if it's not affecting your on-campus classes.

If you are not sure of the expectations or understand the work that is required, please alert me right away. I will not know that you do not understand the work unless you contact me; you may benefit from tutoring, or just need some additional one-on-one instruction.

Evaluation Procedures: Assignments and Point Values

- Journal (30x5): 150
- Descriptive Narrative Essay: 130
- Compare/Contrast Essay 150
- Argumentative Essay: 200
- Digital Presentation: 150
- Portfolio: 150
- Final Exam: 20
- Class Participation: 50

Course Total: 1000 Points

Grades Procedures

Final grades for Hybrid ENGL 111 and Online ENGL 112 include A, B, C, F, and X. Students who earn an A, B, or C meet all of the requirements listed under Course Objectives and receive a minimum grade of at least a C on all graded assignments as well as the course post-test. Students who need more time to develop their writing skills may request an “X” as their final grade, and must enroll for the class immediately for the following semester.

Grade Scale

Course Total: 1000 points

A—900-1000

B—800-899

C—700-799

D—600-699

F—0-599

General Grade Descriptions

- A** A paper with this grade exceeds the basic requirements. It demonstrates well-organized, clear, effective, eloquent, and insightful writing. It has an original, convincing, and inventive thesis; specific and well-constructed evidence and support; seamless organization; and smooth transitions. There are sporadic or rare mechanical errors.
- B** A paper with this grade has a clear, concise, and interesting thesis. This essay also shows thoughtful efforts that go beyond the basic requirements, but might benefit from more effective organization, use of evidence, and critical analysis. There are few mechanical errors.
- C** A paper with this grade adequately fulfills the requirements of the assignment. It meets most of the stated criteria but not all and probably does not do so consistently.
- D** A paper with this grade meets only some of the requirements of the assignment, or the assignment was misunderstood. The thesis is difficult to determine, if it exists at all. There is no critical analysis and no evidence present. There is little organization and poor transitions.
- F** An F is assigned if the work is either incomplete or does not meet the requirements for the assignment. It does not address the question or the instructions. There is no thesis, unclear organization, no supporting evidence, and there are numerous grammar, punctuation, and usage errors.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Guideline

“Students are responsible for informing the instructor of any instructional accommodations and/or special learning needs at the beginning of the semester.” For more information on policies and services for students with disabilities, please consult the Disabilities Services Handbook available from the Office of Academic Support Services. Contact their office in the Stokes Center, LRC Room 102, (937) 708-5648.

Plagiarism Policy

The Wilberforce University Course Catalog clearly prohibits any acts of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism. Plagiarism occurs whenever “anyone’s work is submitted as one’s own.”[1] This includes the use of a published author’s ideas and words without proper attribution or documentation. Plagiarism also includes the copying of term papers, homework, case reports, computer programs and spread sheets, and any other course assignments which are submitted for course credit as the student’s own effort. You will receive an automatic zero for any plagiarized material on the first offense, an “F” in the course for a second offense, in compliance with the University’s policy on plagiarism. All cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Executive Vice-president for Academic and Student Affairs as well as the Dean of Students.

Late Work

I do not accept late work except under extreme circumstances. Any work turned in after the date in which it was due will lose 5% for each day late, including weekends, holidays, and breaks. This policy applies only to final copies of your major essays. All other assignments, such as drafts, and responses must be turned in when they are due or will receive a zero for the assignment unless other arrangements are agreed upon in advance.

Major Assignments

Descriptive Narrative Essay

The purpose of this assignment is for you to develop and write a personal narrative related to one of two films: *The Blind Side* and *Precious*.

Choose one of the following options for this essay, or write your essay using a combination of both options:

- *Experience Essay*--Watch both films, then consider aspects of the film that you can personally relate to, and then write a short descriptive essay telling a related story from your perspective.
- *Narrative Story Extraction*--retell one of the character's story in their word, from their perspective, or from one or several of the main character's perspective; revise the story, or selection of the story, from the selected character's perspective.

This essay must be well developed and follow the formal essay structure with minimal grammatical and mechanical errors. This essay must be a minimum of 2-3 pages in length, or 500-700 words, and follow the formal essay structure with minimal grammatical and mechanical errors. Description is created by mentally re-experiencing what you hope to describe, and creating an idea on which your description hangs.

Concentrate on seeing and feeling your subject then showing your reader what you saw and felt about the subject. Description is not a catalog of everything present in the place, or a display of fancy, poetic words; it is a re-experience of a subject through your eyes. Do not feel obligated to cover everything about your subject. Instead, focus on small details that capture the essence of the larger pictures, more like a snapshot or a close-up shot of the subject you are describing.

Comparison/Contrast Essay

The purpose of this assignment is to determine and analyze the similarities and differences between a novel and a film; primarily the novel and film of *Precious* or *The Blind Side*. This description will help you first to determine whether a particular assignment is asking for comparison/contrast and then to generate a list of similarities and differences, decide which similarities and differences to focus on, and organize your paper so that it will be clear and effective. It will also explain how you can (and why you should) develop a thesis that goes beyond "Thing A and Thing B are similar in many ways but different in others."

In your career as a student, you will encounter many different kinds of writing assignments, each with its own requirements. One of the most common is the comparison/contrast essay, in which you focus on the ways in which certain things or ideas—usually two of them—are similar to (this is the comparison) and/or different from (this is the contrast) one another. By assigning such essays, your instructors are encouraging you to make connections between texts or ideas, engage in critical thinking, and go beyond mere description or summary to generate interesting analysis: when you reflect on similarities and differences, you gain a deeper understanding of the items you are comparing, their relationship to each other, and what is most important about them.

Argumentative Essay

Argumentative or persuasive essays, as these names suggest, attempt to convince the reader of a debatable or controversial point of view related to the topics that were discussed or showcased in the novels or films *Precious* or *The Blind Side*. This essay must include at least three sources to support your argument.

Your approach here is to take a stand on an issue that was shown in *Precious*, *The Blind Side*, or both. Some of those topics may include, but are not limited to, illiteracy, incest, adultery, alternative schools, adoption, child custody, teen pregnancy, etc.,. You must clearly state your argument as your thesis statement and support your thesis with evidence to back-up your stance, not to explore or flesh out an unresolved topic in the text.

Digital Presentation

The Digital Presentation is a way to share your research with the class and present a culmination of your diligent work throughout the semester. Your presentation may discuss any of your essays that you have completed this semester. You should provide a high-level overview of your essay, including your primary argument and strongest points of support.

Your presentation must be 10-15 minutes long; if you choose to submit an electronic oral presentation, your presentation must include at least 20 slides with a media enhancement. The media enhancement may include a narrative voice-over, video clip, or audio clip to enhance your analysis.

E-Portfolio

The e-portfolio is a digital collection of your work that you completed throughout the semester. The purpose of the portfolio is to showcase polished revisions of your best work, and show the progression of your work throughout the semester. You may revise any of your major essays to earn a higher letter grade on that essay based on your revision. Your portfolio must include drafts of all of your major assignments to receive full credit.

The portfolio must be submitted electronically; you may accomplish several ways. You could simply compile all of the components into an email and send it to me; you could you publish your work on a blog by creating a free blog at <http://www.blogspot.com/>.

You could also submit your work as a collection of *GoogleDocuments*. To create GoogleDocuments, access *Google*, select the *More* drop-down menu, select GoogleDocuments, then select *Create New*. If you submit your work on blogspot, GoogleDocuments, or any other free electronic resource, please send me an email with the link and make sure that I have access.

Journal

Over the course of the semester you will submit responses to journal prompts that I will post to the course blog the first day of each week. You are required to post at least two responses; one response to the prompt, and one response to another students' post. Your responses should engage the points the authors are making, and must go beyond simply agreeing or disagreeing, or indicating whether or not you think that prompt or response is simply “good” or “bad.”

For instance, if you think that a prompt or response is “boring,” you need to indicate why and what would have improved it: what changes in language, tone, approach would have made to the prompt more interesting? Or you may simply take a point and discuss it from your perspective. Your first post must be submitted by the second class of the week by the beginning of class and consist of at least 100 words.

Ground Rules for Journal Posts

These journal posts/responses are your opportunity to spark class discussion, as well as continue class discussion, outside of the classroom setting. These are YOUR thoughts, responses, and comments, so I am not emphasizing grammar, punctuation, style, and syntax as if you were writing a paper; however, I need to establish some ground rules.

1. Rule #1: Personal attacks--if you have an issue with a comment, address and dispute the comment, not person who made it.
2. Rule #2: Profanity--remember that we are a civil community. Just as you would not use particularly foul language in a face-to-face class discussion, I ask that you have the same respect for our online community.
3. Rule #3: Be clear so we all understand—if you want to incorporate slang into your post, please make sure that you translate for the rest of us.

Hybrid ENGL 111 Course Calendar

All assignments are due at the end of the respective week, unless otherwise noted.

Week 1

- Introduction: Working with Literature
- Chapter 1: Good Writers Are Good Readers
- Chapter 2: The Writing Process
- Pre-test and Course Review
- View the film *Precious*

Week 2

- Chapter 3: Narration
- Chapter 4: Description
- Review the [Writing Process](#)
- Thesis statements and drafting
- Developing Strong Argumentative [Thesis Statements](#)
- View the film *The Blind Side*
- Submit your response to either one of the films

Week 3

- Discuss Description and Narration
- Declare theme and topics for the Descriptive Narrative Essay
- Discuss critical reading
- [Review Rhetorical Strategies](#)
- **Submit Draft of the Descriptive Narrative Essay**

Week 4

- Chapter 7: Comparison and Contrast
- [Avoiding Plagiarism](#) on page 644
- Review [Documentation](#) on page 646

- Review [Comparison and Contrast](#)
- Submit your response to two texts; compare and contrast major themes

Week 5

- Finding Sources on page 638
- Evaluating Sources on page 640
- Finding and [Evaluating Sources](#)
- Declare theme and topic for your Comparison and Contrast Essay

Week 6

- Review critical, responsive reading
- **Submit Draft of the Comparison/Contrast Essay**

Week 7

- Chapter 11: Argumentation
- Introduction to Argument
- Review [Argumentative Essay](#)
- Mid-term review
- Review all assigned texts from the beginning of the semester

Week 8

- Mid-term Review
- Mid-term Exam

Week 9

- Select themes and topics for Argumentative Essay
- Read selected texts related to argument; links are posted on the Calendar
- Elements and strategies for writing arguments
- Review [Logical Fallacies](#)

- Submit your response to one of the assigned readings

Week 10

- Chapter 11: Argumentation
- Select topics for Argumentative Essay
- [Persuasive Strategies](#): Pathos, Ethos, Logos

Week 11

- Review the film *The Great Debaters*
- Submit your response to *The Great Debaters*

Week 12

- Chapter 12: Combining the Methods
- Review [Digital Presentations](#)
- Schedule presentations
- Topic selection for presentation
- **Submit your draft of the Argumentative Essay**

Week 13

- Discuss portfolio
- Discuss synthesis and revision

Week 14

- Digital Presentations
- Final Exam Review
- Compile portfolios, short introductory message to introduce the portfolio

Week 15

- **Submit portfolios no later than Friday, 5:00 PM EST**
 - NOTE: Late portfolios will receive an automatic zero in my grade book

Week 16

- Final Exams

Proposed Course Syllabus: Online ENGL 112

Catalog Description

The Freshman Writing Program consists of competency-based writing courses designed to teach students writing skills needed to succeed in college and beyond their college education. This course will focus on writing clear, concise, and well-organized compositions. This course will dedicate some attention to writing about Literature and understanding the process of writing. Students will also learn basic research skills and documentation methods, as well as methods to evaluate evidence and other information.

This will be the catalog description of the online course...

Course Outcomes

By the end of this semester, students will be able to:

- Preview, skim, read, and annotate a literary work, finding its main and supporting points
- Prepare and present a critical analysis of a range of literary works
- Present the results of the above critical reading and thinking in both written and oral form.
- Use library research facilities, including OPAC, OhioLink, CD-ROM Databases, and the Internet
- Document sources effectively, using MLA format
- Use paraphrased and quoted source material correctly
- Evaluate the quality of researched sources
- Synthesize material from various sources and from differing points of view
- Conceptualize an appropriate audience for the student's own writing and argue persuasively and logically
- Demonstrate effective use of the writing process (generating ideas; planning, drafting, and developing; revising, editing, and proofreading)

Course Communication

Students will be **required to have access to the Internet** through a Java Script-enabled browser, Netscape Navigator 4.7 or better or Internet Explorer 6.0 or better. AOL is not compatible. In addition, students will need to obtain a web or video camera (usually less than \$20), create a free Skype account: skype.com as well as a free Engrade account at engrade.com.

The student's request to enroll in a course delivered via the Internet suggests his/her familiarity with navigating through a site, using a discussion board and virtual chat, sending email with attachments, submitting materials via a drop box, as well as the ability to format documents in Word regardless of the word processing software available to the student.

The student's request to enroll in a course delivered via the Internet suggests his/her familiarity with navigating through a site, using a discussion board and virtual chat, sending email with attachments, submitting materials via a drop box, as well as the ability to format documents in Word regardless of the word processing software available to the student.

Students enrolled in Hybrid ENGL 111 and Online ENGL 112 need to be registered users with University Computing Services. All students have access to the Internet, email, and Microsoft Office in the R. E. Stokes Learning Resource Center and in all dormitories. Students should have a working knowledge of Microsoft Word and be able to access resources electronically. Students will access most of their research materials via the Internet through OhioLINK and the Ohio Private Academic Libraries (OPAL) consortium.

Assignment Submission

I am using an online grade book to provide faster access to grades and increase efficiency during draft and response review. Please sign up for a free, secure account on Engrade, the website is <http://www.engage.com/student-signup>. Your user name will be in the following format: engage-profevans-1234 (replace "1234" with the last four numbers of your Wilberforce ID number). Your grades will be secure and inaccessible to anyone who does not have access to your ID number. In addition, I am using GoogleDocs to review and comment on all drafts. If you do not have an existing Gmail account, to submit drafts, please create a free account at <http://mail.google.com/mail/signup>. My user name on Gmail is professor.r.evans@gmail.com; my account allows me to participate in live chat with students as well share and review your drafts and other documents.

Communication Procedures

This course requires the following: email for general communication, email for file exchange between student/teacher, small group discussion, whole class group discussion, optional virtual chats, and video chats via Skype. Course assignment file transfer between teacher/student will be handled via email attachment until Engrade's limited file exchange/messaging tool is improved.

Attendance Policy

To maintain compliance with state and federal regulation, through the State of Ohio and the federal Department of Education, Wilberforce University is required to maintain accurate attendance records for all courses. Hybrid and online courses are not exempt from this requirement; however, your participation in these courses will occur in a different manner.

Student "attendance" in hybrid and online courses is defined as active participation in the course as described in each course syllabus. The hybrid ENGL 111 has both synchronous and asynchronous requirements; the online ENGL 112 course does not include a synchronous class requirement, however, students will have the option to communicate via Skype with me and other students in class, throughout the semester, and may submit an e-portfolio at the end of the term. Synchronous (or real time) learning experiences happen at the end of the term and occur at same time for all students in a section. Asynchronous learning experiences happen throughout the course and do not require student participation at a scheduled time.

Regular attendance is a key component to successfully complete this class. To maintain the required attendance for these classes, students must actively participate in a class activity a minimum of 3 calendar days per week for each course of 3-4 credits. Any first-term student, or any student seeking re-entry through the hybrid ENGL 111 or online ENGL 112 course, who does not log into classes within the first seven days of the term will be withdrawn from their classes and their enrollment will be cancelled. Students who have logged in but are absent from classes 21 consecutive calendar days (excluding scheduled breaks) will be administratively withdrawn from the program. Please be aware that your financial aid is contingent upon the number of hours you are actively enrolled in, so administrative withdrawal from a course will negatively impact your financial aid.

- Attendance is triggered by completing an activity listed on the Assignments tab in Engrade. Simply logging in will not earn credit for attendance.
- Students have a greater chance of successfully completing this class when they actively engage with the class and course material, and actively participate in the class 3 to 5 days a week. If you work ahead, it is still important that you access course material every few days to update your attendance.

Students may appeal to the Dean of Students if they feel an error has been made in their attendance calculation. Plan to log on and mark attendance every few days.

If life is getting in the way of your completing your assignments, please make sure to alert me immediately if you have a problem that might keep you from submitting work on time (work schedule issues, family emergency, illness, death in the family, etc.) In addition, you should alert your division dean and advisor, even if it's not affecting your on-campus classes.

If you are not sure of the expectations or understand the work that is required, please alert me right away. I will not know that you do not understand the work unless you contact me; you may benefit from tutoring, or just need some additional one-on-one instruction.

Grades Procedures

Final grades for Hybrid ENGL 111 and Online ENGL 112 include A, B, C, F, and X. Students who earn an A, B, or C meet all of the requirements listed under Course Objectives and receive a minimum grade of at least a C on all graded assignments as well as the course post-test. Students who need more time to develop their writing skills may request an "X" as their final grade, and must enroll for the class immediately for the following semester.

Grade Scale

Course Total: 1000 points

A—900-1000

B—800-899

C—700-799

D—600-699

F—0-599

General Grade Descriptions

- A** A paper with this grade exceeds the basic requirements. It demonstrates well-organized, clear, effective, eloquent, and insightful writing. It has an original, convincing, and inventive thesis; specific and well-constructed evidence and support; seamless organization; and smooth transitions. There are sporadic or rare mechanical errors.
- B** A paper with this grade has a clear, concise, and interesting thesis. This essay also shows thoughtful efforts that go beyond the basic requirements, but might benefit from more effective organization, use of evidence, and critical analysis. There are few mechanical errors.
- C** A paper with this grade adequately fulfills the requirements of the assignment. It meets most of the stated criteria but not all and probably does not do so consistently.
- D** A paper with this grade meets only some of the requirements of the assignment, or the assignment was misunderstood. The thesis is difficult to determine, if it exists at all. There is no critical analysis and no evidence present. There is little organization and poor transitions.
- F** An F is assigned if the work is either incomplete or does not meet the requirements for the assignment. It does not address the question or the instructions. There is no thesis, unclear organization, no supporting evidence, and there are numerous grammar, punctuation, and usage errors.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Guideline

“Students are responsible for informing the instructor of any instructional accommodations and/or special learning needs at the beginning of the semester.” For more information on policies and services for students with disabilities, please consult the Disabilities Services Handbook available from the Office of Academic Support Services. Contact their office in the Stokes Center, LRC Room 102, (937) 708-5648.

Plagiarism Policy

The Wilberforce University Course Catalog clearly prohibits any acts of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism. Plagiarism occurs whenever “anyone’s work is submitted as one’s own.”[1] This includes the use of a published author’s ideas and words without proper attribution or documentation. Plagiarism also includes the copying of term papers, homework, case reports, computer programs and spread sheets, and any other course assignments which are submitted for course credit as the student’s own effort. You will receive an automatic zero for any plagiarized material on the first offense, an “F” in the course for a second offense, in compliance with the University’s policy on plagiarism. All cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Executive Vice-president for Academic and Student Affairs as well as the Dean of Students.

Late Work

I do not accept late work except under extreme circumstances. Any work turned in after the date in which it was due will lose 5% for each day late, including weekends, holidays, and breaks. This policy applies only to final copies of your major essays. All other assignments, such as drafts, and responses must be turned in when they are due or will receive a zero for the assignment unless other arrangements are agreed upon in advance.

Evaluation Procedures:

- Journal (30x5): 150
- Essay Responses (6x10): 60
- Short Story Analysis Essay: 130
- Poetry Analysis Essay: 150
- Drama Analysis Essay: 200
- Oral Presentation: 150
- Portfolio: 100
- Final Exam: 30
- Class Participation: 30

Course Total 1000 Points

Major Assignments

Short Story Analysis

Select a theme that relates to a social issue that we have covered in class based on the films and texts that we have covered. Possible topics include literacy, economic disparity, overcoming obstacles, biracial adoption, etc. Write a detailed analysis of a selected short story that relates to your theme, or captures your interest. Discuss the basic elements of the short story, including the narration, setting, conflict, plot, characters, language/style, or theme (s) within the story.

Poetry Analysis

Write a detailed analysis of a selected poem that relates to your selected theme. Your analysis may be an explication (line-by-line analysis), or a detailed discussion of a significant element of the poem, such as imagery, use of sound, allusions, rhyme scheme, figurative language, or a specific theme within the poem.

Drama Analysis

Write a detailed analysis of a selected dramatic piece that relates to your theme, or captures your interest. The dramatic piece may be produced in print, a theatrical performance (play), a film. Discuss the basic elements of the drama, including the setting, conflict, plot, characters, or theme (s) within the drama. You may use scenes from any of the films that we have viewed (*Precious*, *The Blind Side*, *Sonny's Blues*, *A Raisin in the Sun*), to support your argument related to the drama piece that you are analyzing.

Digital Presentation

The digital presentation is a way to share your research with the class and present a culmination of your diligent work throughout the semester. Your presentation may discuss any of your essays that you have completed this semester. You should provide a high-level overview of your essay, including your primary argument and strongest points of support.

E-Portfolio

The portfolio is a collection of your work that you completed throughout the semester. The purpose of the portfolio is to showcase polished revisions of your best work, and show the progression of your work throughout the semester. You may revise any of your major essays to earn a higher letter grade. Your portfolio must include drafts of all of your major assignments to receive full credit.

Responses (R1 – R5)

Over the course of the semester you will submit responses to five readings from your textbook. Your responses should engage the points the authors are making, and must go beyond simply agreeing or disagreeing, or indicating whether or not you think that this essay/article/image is “good” or “bad.” For instance, if you think that a story is “boring,” you need to indicate why and what would have improved it: what changes in language, tone, approach would have made to make the story more interesting? Or you may simply take a point and discuss it from your perspective. Your responses must be submitted on Engrade by the beginning your class and consist of at least 100 words.

To post a response, select the **Calendar** icon at the top of the page, select the title of the assignment (for example, click *Response 1-4*), then click *Post a Reply*. Type your response, and then click *Save Reply*. Responses must be posted by 5:00 pm on the day that they are due. Late responses will receive a zero.

Ground Rules for Journal Posts

These journal posts/responses are your opportunity to spark class discussion, as well as continue class discussion, outside of the classroom setting. These are YOUR thoughts, responses, and comments, so I am not emphasizing grammar, punctuation, style, and syntax as if you were writing a paper; however, I need to establish some ground rules.

1. Rule #1: Personal attacks--if you have an issue with a comment, address and dispute the comment, not person who made it.
2. Rule #2: Profanity--remember that we are a civil community. Just as you would not use particularly foul language in a face-to-face class discussion, I ask that you have the same respect for our online community.
3. Rule #3: Be clear so we all understand—if you want to incorporate slang into your post, please make sure that you translate for the rest of us.

Course Calendar

All assignments are due at the end of the respective week, unless otherwise noted.

Week 1

- Introductions, critical reading
- Chapter 1: What is Literature? How and Why does it Matter?
- Chapter 2: How to Read Closely
- Review Literary Terms
- Review Writing Process
- Pre-test and Course Review
- Introduction: Writing about Literature
- Avoiding Plagiarism

Week 2

- Chapter 3: How to Make Arguments about Literature
- Chapter 4: The Writing Process
- Chapter 5: How to Write about Stories
- Review the Structure of a Story, Thesis statements and drafting
- Read short story [*Sonny's Blues*](#) on page 318

Week 3

- Discuss elements of the Short Story
- Discuss Critical Reading
- Review Rhetorical Strategies
- Review Critical Strategies
- Review research methods and strategies
- Begin reading Sapphire's *Push* or Michael Oher's *The Blind Side*

Week 4

- Continue reading Sapphire's *Push* or Michael Oher's *The Blind Side*
- Organizing research
- Analyzing resources
- Post your response to *Push* or *The Blind Side*

Week 5

- Review methods to find and evaluate sources
- Review Finding Sources on page 638
- Evaluating Sources on page 640
- **Submit your first draft of Short Story Analysis**

Week 6

- Read Chapter 6: How to Write about Poems
- Poetry Review
- Review of Literature and major elements
- Post your response to poem [*Let America be America Again*](#) on page 1062 or select a poem in Sapphire's *Push*

Week 7

- Review all assigned works until this week and your Literary Terms
- Mid-term review
- Submit your response to poem [*The Road Not Taken*](#) on page 1415 or select a poem from Sapphire's *Black Wings and Blind Angels*
- Begin reading the play *A Raisin in the Sun* on page 635-699

Week 8

- Mid-term Review
- Mid-term Exam due by the end of the week

Week 9

- Chapter 7: How to Write about Plays
- Review elements of Drama
- Critical, responsive reading to drama
- Continue reading *A Raisin in the Sun*
- **Submit your Draft of Poetry Analysis**

Week 10

- Select topics for Drama Analysis
- View film *A Raisin in the Sun* (2008)

Week 11

- Finish the film *A Raisin in the Sun*
- Post your response to *A Raisin in the Sun* (play or film version)

Week 12

- Review Digital Presentations
- Schedule presentations
- Topic selection for presentation
- **Submit your Draft of Drama Analysis**

Week 13

- Discuss portfolio
- Discuss synthesis and revision
- Oral Presentations (digital or face-to-face)
- Complete Post-test

Week 14

- Oral Presentations (digital or face-to-face)
- Final Exam Review
- Compile digital portfolio with a short introductory message to introduce the portfolio and a table of contents

Week 15

- Make-up Presentations
- **Submit portfolios no later than Friday, 5:00 PM EST**
 - NOTE: Late portfolios will receive an automatic zero in my grade book

Week 16

- Final Exams

VITA

Robin Lynn Evans

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: MAKING BRICKS WITHOUT STRAW: TEACHING AND ASSESSING
NEW LITERACY SKILLS IN A SMALL, PRIVATE HBCU

Major Field: English

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy/Education in your major at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in July, 2012.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Arts in English at Wright State University, Dayton, OH, USA in 1997.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in English at Wilberforce University, Wilberforce, OH, USA in 1997.

Experience: Wilberforce University, Assistant Professor of English, 8/2008 – Present
ITT Technical Institute, Online Adjunct Professor of English, 3/2005 – Present
Oklahoma State University, Doctoral Teaching Associate, 8/2003 – 5/2008
Rogers State University, Instructor of English, 8/2001 -8/ 2002

Professional Memberships:

National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE)
Conference for College Composition and Communication (CCCC)
National Writing Project; Oklahoma State University Summer Institute-2006
Association for Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW)

Name: Robin Evans

Date of Degree: July 20th, 2012

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: MAKING BRICKS WITHOUT STRAW: TEACHING AND ASSESSING NEW LITERACY SKILLS IN A SMALL, PRIVATE HBCU

Pages in Study: 201

Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major Field: English

Scope and Method of Study: Scope of the study comprised a three-phase Participatory Action Research study of teaching and assessing New Literacy Skills in small, private HBCUs using open source tools

Findings and Conclusions:

This project describes a small-scale case study, using Participatory Action Research (PAR) methods, documenting three semesters of first-year writing courses at Wilberforce University, specifically focusing on teaching and assessing New Literacy Skills. The case study is broken into three phases: Phase 1 is the pilot study conducted from August – November, 2010; Phase 2 is the continuation, collecting survey responses from two other first-year writing classes, and other first-year writing faculty members at other small, private HBCUs from August – November, 2011; Phase 3 is the conclusion of the study, which includes sharing the findings and recommendations from Phases 1 and 2 with my colleagues who teach in the First-Year Program and Writing Program at Wilberforce University in August 2012, and submitting a course proposal for digital composition courses to implement during the summer semester in June, 2013.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Ronald Brooks