

**Manuscript Number: 10-524 Return by: Feb 15, 2009**

# **Manuscript Evaluation**

**Category:**  Article

**Title**: Basically Unheard: Developmental Writers and the Conversation on Online Learning

**Please score the article from 1 to 4 (1 is low, 4 is high)**

**Contribution to the Field**: (To what extent does the article add something to our understanding of the subject?) 1 2 3 4 x

Comments:

Excellent article on basic writers and online instruction, one of the best I have read as a reviewer.

**Appropriateness to Audience**: (To what extent does the article address the audience of teachers who teach English during the first two years of college?)

1 2 3 4 x

Comments:

Definitely written for those who teach students during the first two years of college as many basic writers are in that category.

**Quality of Presentation:** (To what extent does the presentation of the article contribute to its success?) 1 2 3 4 x

Comments:

The article is well organized and flows well from one issue to another. Headings keep major ideas clear at all times and are essential as you discuss many ideas requiring sub headings.

**Quality and Currency of Scholarship:** (To what extent is the article informed by current and relevant scholarship?) 1 2 3 4 x

Comments:

You cite many excellent sources. Every statement you make about online learning and basic writers is support with at least one source and often with several sources.

**Quality of Classroom Application**: (To what extent is the article grounded in reflective teaching practice?)

1 2 3 4 x

Comments:

Excellent article. The experience of the instructor is well demonstrated.

**PUBLICATION DECISION**

\_x\_\_Accept (with minor revisions if indicated ***above*** or on enclosed manuscript)

\_\_\_Revise and resubmit (suggestions indicated above and/or in the letter to the author)

\_\_\_Do not accept - reasons indicated above.

Reviewer's Name:  **Louise Bown**

Email: Louise.Bown@slcc.edu

Please address the author directly on the attached sheet. You might wish to put your comments in the form of a friendly letter, indicating strengths of the submission and suggesting constructive and concrete revisions.

PLEASE BE SURE TO RETURN ALL FORMS BY THE REQUESTED DATE. THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND YOUR PROFESSIONALISM.

### REVIEWER COMMENTS TO AUTHOR

(Please address the author directly.)

Dear Author,

Your article is excellent. It reads like a polished, well reviewed, revised article. It is also pertinent and needed. As you state, there has not been much research on basic writing and online learning.

As an online and hybrid instructor for 15 + years, I was excited to read, “Online learning, according to a recent Department of Education meta-analysis (Means et al. 2009), is equal to and sometimes better than traditional face-to-face instruction, while hybrid education is best of all.” I was encouraged to read this source as my sense is that most students in online classes do as well or better than they would in a traditional classroom, but knowing the research continues to show this trend is encouraging.

However, I would like more information on why hybrid is best of all. Although that is not the intent of your article, perhaps a statement about its effectiveness would be helpful for those considering a hybrid rather than a fully online basic writing course. I can surmise that hybrid courses provide students with both the online component and the face-to-face interaction that they need. In my experience, however, at my institution, my fully online students do better. Students in my hybrid classes tend to think they can ignore the online component since they meet once a week in class. I would be interested in knowing what the research says about hybrid classes nationwide.

You discuss important issues most instructors don’t think about—offering support and dealing with emotions. You state “assuring students of all necessary support is just as important as including clear information on objectives, assignments, due dates, the more common stuff of a syllabus.” Adult learners don’t always feel comfortable asking for help, but knowing that it is offered may encourage them to ask more readily. You also state, “Because emotions can influence learning both positively and negatively, instructors must build in mechanisms that encourage learners to evaluate and communicate their feelings (Zembylas).” These are both essential elements in an online class, especially for basic writers.

Adding some information about online chats would add to your article. You state “An online syllabus, as well as the course it describes, therefore needs to convey the positive affect that is expressed much more easily by gesture and voice in a face-to-face learning experience.” Using a chat room such as Wimba in Blackboard Vista can provide students with the opportunity to hear from the instructor and other students as they discuss readings or peer review a student draft together. Individual rooms can be set up, thus allowing students to move from the whole class setting to smaller group discussions.

Moreover, another feature that can be added to a management system such as Blackboard Vista is voice email. It can be used by the instructor to send comments about drafts, thus including tone of voice and inflection. The instructor can also more readily send more comments than would be possible with written text in much less time. Both of these features could be briefly mentioned in your article in order to give instructors who are contemplating teaching basic writing online and also those who currently teach online but may not be aware of these features. If Blackboard Vista is not used, an online program such as Audacity could be used to email comments to students.

Table 1 is excellent. It provides a readily accessible summary of your article, along with some new detail.

The introduction reads more like the middle of your article. The first sentence, “After summarizing both the factors considered to predict success in an online learning environment and the conditions associated with success in adult education in general,” sounds like more the middle. I suggest beginning with a more forceful statement about what the article is about. Then use that statement later.

Statements like “Attempts to close the gap for the group he calls the ‘technopoor’ tend to focus on getting computers into the public schools, leaving out the adult population, a population that makes up a large part of the basic writing population” and “distance education may actually increase rather than

diminish the gap between elites and non-elites, because the bells and whistles of exciting new technological tools often make it more difficult for lesser advantaged adults to access online education designed around the new advances” highlight the gap between younger more educationally prepared students and basic writing more mature adults. Your discussion of this issue is important and will help online instructors focus on the issues they need to be aware of and address.

Excellent article. I look forward to reading it in the journal.

Sincerely,

Louise Bown