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### **Blogs, Wikis, and E-portfolios:**

#### **The Effectiveness of Technology on Actual Learning in College Composition**

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**Abstract:** This study examines the effectiveness of using blogs, wikis, and e-portfolios in College Composition classes. The value of these tools was examined in their relationship with actual and real learning where these concepts are defined as the gaining of knowledge that is readily retrievable and is used in an active fashion that shows it has been integrated into the thought processes. The questions examined are whether or not there is a pedagogical underpinning to use these technologies and whether or not these tools really enhance student writing. Over the course of three semesters, the work of 207 students was examined to determine the effect of assigning work on blogs, wikis, and e-portfolios. The students ranged from dual-enrolled high school students to traditional students and to those returning to class after an extended absence. Some students had previous experience with computers and others were novices. The pedagogical areas examined in this study are Time on Task, Collaboration, Peer Feedback, and Reflection. Using these criteria as indicators of success, the application of blogs, wikis, and e-portfolios did create a learning environment that enhanced the opportunity for student success. In addition, an examination of student writing showed an improvement in the composition of their academic prose across the duration of the courses. The research shows that these technologies do contribute to actual learning in composition classrooms.

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### **Engaging Audio Learning With Voice-Over PowerPoint**

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**Abstract:** Voice-Over PowerPoint (VO-PPT) is an important tool for engaging audio learners in all online settings. It complements visual learning which is addressed with the text, printed lectures, videos, and PowerPoint and kinesthetic learning which is engaged by use of the keyboard and mouse. Pedagogically, VO-PPT is a flexible, learner-centered tool. It utilizes a mastery approach to learning as the student can access individual slides, replay a slide repeatedly, and view slides with or without the audio. While video clips and movies may appeal to audio learning, the technology necessary to deliver this media is expensive and often difficult to download. Videos rarely meet specific instructor needs. VO-PPT addresses the above needs and problems. Production is easy and inexpensive. The learning curve for VO-PPT is short. Instructor preparation requires no more time than planning and delivering a solid lecture. Broadcast quality perfection is neither necessary nor desired. Students hear their instructor as if in class – including the “um’s” and “ah’s.” Instructor’s intonation and passion prevent dullness and encourages rapport-building necessary for efficacious online education. End of semester student evaluations suggest positive learning outcomes and perceived efficacy with a 70% positive evaluation. Unsolicited testimonials, while anecdotal, contribute positively to quantitative measures.

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### **Undergraduate Journal Clubs: Challenging Students to Think Critically and Professionally**

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**Abstract:** Journal clubs provide an opportunity to discuss research articles from peer-reviewed journals. Professionals and faculty often use journal clubs as a form of continuing education. We used the journal club concept in three different courses in order to provide undergraduates with a weekly forum to discuss current research in the field. In two of the journal clubs, the size was kept small (4-5 students/group) to ensure each group member would participate. The other was run within a senior seminar class of 20 students. The discussions focused on evaluating the robustness of the study methodology, results and limitations of the work. Students in two of the three groups were evaluated for critical thinking abilities using a set of 10 questions, as an additional part of their standard “Student Response to Instruction” at the end of the semester. Control groups, not exposed to journal club, were also evaluated and compared. We find that students in the senior seminar class who had journal club and used journal articles to research a specific topic had higher scores in the critical thinking evaluation than students who just had journal club. The lowest scores were for those students in senior seminar class alone, who were not shown how to read and critique scientific articles, but still had to research a topic and write a review article. Overall, the results suggest that incorporation of a journal club into a senior seminar or writing class helps students with critical thinking skills. Future work included discussion and finally incorporation of journal clubs into undergraduate senior seminar courses.

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