

## When Business Students go to Work: A Study of Transition from School to Work

**Krista DiGuilio**

---

*Krista DiGuilio is an Entrepreneurship major from Cleveland, Ohio. She chose to research what is being done at the University of Dayton to help students transition from college writing to workplace writing because she is a business student herself and is interested in what courses are offered at schools to help students write in the real world. You can contact Krista at [diguilkl@notes.udayton.edu](mailto:diguilkl@notes.udayton.edu).*

Employers have often complained that employees are lacking writing skills in the work place. Research has shown that these problems are due to a gap between college writing and professional business writing. The gap is due to encountering new genres in a work place setting that students are not prepared for, a different basis for evaluation from school to work, and a different kind of motivation or reward. Programs at universities such as Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and courses offered at businesses are helping students, but more needs to be done in order to benefit students in this transition. This paper will explore the gap between writing in the college and business worlds, assess what is being done to prevent it, and recommend ways to change it.

### *What are the Problems Students have when Switching from School to Work?*

When students transition from school to work, the genres they encounter change. Students go from writing essays and book reviews to writing professional reports and memos in one big jump. There is also a different basis for evaluation when going from school to work. At school the purpose of being graded means comparing your work to others, while at work there is no grading and employees are expected to produce the best possible product. The sense of motivation or reward is also different and causing a problem

because assignments are not handed in for a particular grade or academic purpose while at work.

When looking at problems that students have from an ethnographic standpoint, the new genres that they encounter when entering the workplace seem to be completely different from what they are used to while in school. Essays, book reviews, lab reports, and examinations are common when writing at school, but professional business type writing that would be used in a business setting seems to be absent. Therefore, when students switch from school to work, they have trouble comprehending and writing the new genre that is presented to them (Beaufort 176).

When students write in school they are used to being sorted, ranked, and graded. This depends on the degree to which their writing demonstrates their learning (Dias et al 47). The general view that students hold is that writing is epistemic, or learning oriented. This means that you learn just from experience (Dias et al 48). This is a fundamental difference between the workplace and academic writing. In college the ranking and sorting of students compares one student's work to all the others, however in the workplace the goal is to produce the best possible product from each employee each time an assignment is given (Dias et al 62).

The sorting and ranking of students creates a social motive that is persuasive and inescapable. Even if a professor assigns a task that is supposed to be workplace related, the fact is that the assignment is still being assigned and handed in to the professor for a grade. Grades are seen as rewards to students, and is there sole motivation to perform. These constraints give students major problems when they attempt to write in the workplace because there is little or no motivation for them to perform the task. (Dias et al 44).

### *How are Students Writing at the University?*

University writing tends to be based on just a few fundamental courses in the freshman year of college, and then relies on experience the rest of the way. Upper level courses lack writing instruction because the foundational freshman course is seen as substantial enough to sustain throughout the

four years. This system is flawed and contributes to the gap between school and work.

College writing was always for the purpose of being evaluated, and lacked writing instruction past the freshman English course (Beaufort 161). The freshman English course was used mainly as a service that was intended to train writers for courses to come. In some programs, English departments collaborated with business schools or any type of other school to teach specialized writing courses in their area of study, such as a technical or business writing course. But, all of these courses are seen as foundational, and it is seen as an unstated assumption that once you are taught how to write, it was not needed to learn further in upper level courses (Dias et al 7).

University writing can be considered in some ways disciplinary. But, because it is disciplinary, courses tend to elicit writing that is only common to that specific subject. That writing could not be sufficient in helping students with their writing skills (Dias et al 62).

#### *How are Schools Responding to These Problems?*

One response to students' lack of writing practice throughout the university curriculum was the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) programs which emerged in the 1980s. WAC programs help students write effectively across their courses each year in their college experience and transition into a workplace environment. The philosophies of these programs include:

- Writing is the responsibility of the entire academic community.
- Writing must be integrated across departmental boundaries.
- Writing instruction must be continuous during all four years of undergraduate education.
- Writing promotes learning.
- Only by practicing the conventions of an academic discipline will students begin to communicate effectively within that discipline (Kiefer, sec. 1).

Faculty in all disciplines have discovered that assigning writing in their classes helps students learn material and improve their thinking about ideas in the courses. Writing

assigned across the curriculum also helps students prepare for the daily tasks they'll face on the job, no matter what the job is. Students will learn more and will leave the university better prepared to face communication challenges if they write consistently over the course of a four-year college program (Kiefer, Into. to WAC, pg. 2).

WAC finds its merit in removing students from their everyday way of learning. Incorporating WAC techniques tends to change the dynamic of the classroom. Teacher-centered classrooms become student centered. Rather than the teacher being the person that just provides information and knowledge, the teacher becomes a facilitator, aiding students' understanding. Assuming that students gain new knowledge by making associations with prior knowledge, the writing activities commonly used across the curriculum give students the opportunity to make those connections (Sorenson 62).

Many WAC assignments tend to differ from typical English class writing assignments. Generally, the writing activities fall into two groups: Expressive writing, which appears in learning logs, journals, exit summaries, problem analyses, or peer dialogues, and allows the student to write in their own vocabulary without fear of being "corrected." Product writing appears in more formal assignments. Essays, test question responses, library papers, and lab reports, which is most like what students have been taught to write in English class, are all examples of product writing. Models that illustrate how to modify a topic to a specific curricular area help students learn how to address purpose in terms of audience. Models that illustrate discipline-specific language help students learn how to prepare a more focused, deeper response (Sorenson 62).

WAC programs have been installed at many universities, and are proving to be helpful to students as they move throughout college and also into the business world. The connections that are made in the program seem to be helping students build upon the knowledge that they previously learned, but they don't necessarily help student write outside of school.

### *How are Businesses Responding to These Problems?*

Because the transition from school to work is difficult, companies are having to spend an immense amount of money in order to help new employees write in the workplace. Writing skills are becoming increasingly important in the workplace. More employees are required to write effectively, even if their jobs never included writing previously. One reason for this change is that nearly every worker is connected via email to each other and to their customers. For instance, customer service agents who used to spend 95 percent of their time on the telephone are increasingly required to answer customer inquiries via e-mail. Also, downsizing has eliminated the administrative assistants who used to edit, correct and type business correspondence. Now, all but the upper executives write and send their own letters and e-mail messages. No matter whether the writer is a CEO, a sales manager or a customer service representative, poor communication and writing skills can lead to loss of business (Tyler, sec. 2).

Some businesses are offering business writing courses in their training and development programs so that employees with little business writing experience or poor communication skills can learn and improve on these writing skills. They are educated on what different types of business writing are, such as emails or reports. They also learn to acknowledge the fact that they may need proofreading before finalizing these types of writing. It is seen more effective to train employees together, so that they recognize that many of them needed help. The instructors of the classes try to make everyone feel that this was a common problem across organizations (Tyler, sec. 3).

Different organizations have also been created to go in to different companies and give workshops to help train employees on skills such as writing, public speaking, and presentation skills. One of the larger organizations, called *The Writing Workshop*, focuses on writing with clarity and purpose. It builds on three persuasive communication questions: Why am I communicating? Who is my audience? What do I expect to accomplish? The Writing Workshop offers a 90-minute seminar, called *The Clear Communication*

*Seminar*, that focuses on anyone who struggles with planning and writing a proposal, a report, a business letter, or a presentation that's clear and persuasive. It uses accelerated learning techniques to make the content relevant, meaningful, and useful to participants. The employees benefit from, hands-on, experiential learning that uses discussions, examples, exercises, assignments, and peer critiques. Employees also receive a 78-page workbook that includes techniques, exercises, assignments, and a reference section with a recommended reading list (Sturtevant sec. 1).

Writing programs at businesses and organizations that provide workplace training seem to be beneficial to employees. They learn that proofreading is always beneficial and that communication is key. However, although these programs are helping employees, the problem is that they do not know these skills in the first place.

Although many researchers have established that there is a gap between the college and business world, and that there is not much being done to bridge the gap, they have not studied exactly what is being done in college curriculums, how well prepared students feel to enter the business world, and if what, where, and how frequently they write in classes helps them transition.

### **Methods**

To study this gap between college writing and business writing, I conducted a study at the University of Dayton. The University is a private, Catholic, and Marianist university that was founded in 1850. It is the largest private university in Ohio. I designed and administered two surveys (See Appendix A and B): One for senior University of Dayton School of Business Administration students and one for recent University of Dayton School of Business Administration alumni. I also interviewed an SBA advisor and the Director of Writing Programs for the English Department. I designed the surveys and interviews to answer six research questions:

1. How well prepared do UD students feel to write in the workplace?

2. What training to they get in their classes to help them transition?
3. How much do they write, what do they write, and where do they write at UD?
4. How well prepared were alumni to write in the workplace?
5. How frequently do they write in the workplace, and what do they write?
6. What did they think was the best preparation, and what did they think was missing?

I designed the student survey to see how prepared students thought they were to enter the business world and also to gauge how much, what, and where they wrote. I designed a different survey for UD alumni to see how they evaluated their own experiences writing in college and in the workplace, and to determine whether their experiences writing in the workplace correlates with the attitudes and experiences of UD students. In other words, if UD students feel confident in their writing abilities, do the experiences of alumni confirm or question this attitude?

I collected my data over a period of about three weeks. Twenty senior students completed the student surveys, and forty-eight UD alumni completed the alumni survey. I chose to collect data from senior UD SBA students, because they have gone through most of the business courses that they are required to take in the business school. They are also starting to search for jobs, and many have had internships, which would allow them to express how prepared they felt to write in those situations. I also chose to give surveys to recent UD SBA alumni because they would be able to see more clearly if there was a drastic change from college writing to business writing. They would also be able to tell me if how much, what, and where they wrote in school helped them to transition to business writing. I interviewed an SBA advisor and the professor to find out what in the curriculum is being used to help students with the transition, and also what is else is being done to the curriculum in the future to help.

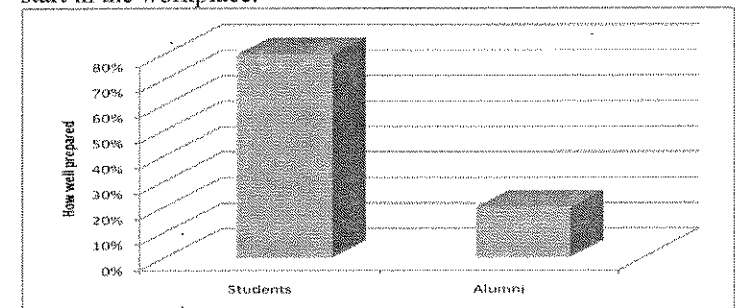
A survey methodology gave me direct students perceptions in response to my research questions. It allowed me to gauge how prepared students and alumni felt to write in

the workplace, and also what, where, and how much they wrote. The strengths of using the interviews were that I received answers to my questions from first hand sources. However, because I did not observe classes or look at the writing students and alumni did, I had to depend on self-reporting from the research participants.

### Results

After completing my research, it was apparent that there was a major gap between students and alumni. While still in school, students very prepared to write in the workplace; however when new alumni entered the workplace, they felt they were not adequately prepared. Also, the amount of writing that students did in school was only a small fraction of what alumni actually wrote in a business setting. Students had experience with writing only a few business type assignments frequently, while alumni wrote all types of assignments frequently in the workplace. Both alumni and students said that writing in an SBA class helped them, but there was just not enough writing in the classes.

80% of students felt fairly well-prepared to write in the workplace, responding with an answer of 5 on a scale of 1-7, however only about 20% of alumni noted that they felt very prepared when they left UD. In fact, 20.5% of alumni claimed to be almost entirely unprepared to write in the workplace, choosing 2 on a scale of 1-7. These results show that there is a major gap between how well prepared the students feel in school, and how well prepared they actually are when they start in the workplace.



UD's curriculum does offer classes that are beneficial to students in order to help prepare them for the business world, but they do not seem to be enough. Professor Elizabeth Wardle, who is the Director of Writing Programs at the University of Dayton, said that two years ago there was an SBA group that assessed how well students wrote by the time they were seniors. They were not happy with the outcome, so they looked at the curriculum and found that there was no required writing class. There was only an optional class that they could take called Small Group Interaction. They changed the curriculum to make it mandatory that students take one of four business writing classes: Business Communication, Technical Communication, Report and Proposal Writing, and Writing through the Web. Wardle felt that the introduction of these classes was beneficial, but that there were not enough people to staff them.

The results also show that employees actually write significantly more in the workplace than students do in school, and that knowledge of all types of business assignments are necessary in the workplace. All students said that they write 30+ pages in a semester in their classes. 60% of students said that they write Reports, Memos, and Power Points the most. They wrote these types of documents about 5+ times in a class. However, proposals and letters seemed to be written the least. This indicates that students had experience with some business type writing, but not all. When alumni were asked how much they wrote at the workplace in a week, 65.9% said that they wrote 10-20 pages and 15.9% said they wrote 30 pages or more. Also, when asked if and how frequently they wrote Proposals, Reports, Memos, and Letters, the responses were all pretty even. 70.5% said that they wrote memos the most, and wrote all types, except Reports, 5+ times a day.

Both students and alumni also felt that writing in an SBA class was beneficial, but they did not write enough in the classes. When students were asked where they wrote most of these business type assignments, about 90% said in an SBA class. Then, when alumni were asked what preparation they had to write at UD, 77.3% said a writing class, 47.2% said an internship, and only 30.6% said writing in an SBA class. They thought the best preparation was internships, but writing

in an SBA class was not far behind –51.7% said internship, 27.6% said writing in an SBA class. Students write almost 100% of business type assignments in their SBA classes, but not in any other classes. Although these classes are seen as beneficial by both students and alumni, there is a need to incorporate these assignments in all classes. Elizabeth Wardle also commented on this subject saying, "I think students need to write in all their classes, so you can't only have one class where they can kind of go and get their inoculation. So, I think what they probably need to do is also make sure that writing is integrated into all of the SBA courses, or at least to many of them."

Overall, students and alumni seemed to have benefited from SBA writing classes, but there just aren't enough classes given or enough writing integrated into all classes. The curriculum was changed to include more SBA writing classes, but writing still needs to be integrated further. My research has shown that when business type assignments are facilitated, it helps students transition easier into the workplace. But, not enough training is given, because when alumni enter the workplace there seems to be a gap. A problem seems to be that there is not enough staffing for the classes that were added to help business students write. My suggestion would be that there should be some type of training session for all business professors to teach them how to integrate business writing into their classes. This way the business writing classes would be better staffed and also the business writing would be integrated into all business classes. Students are obviously having a problem transitioning from school to work, and something more needs to be done in the curriculum to change this.

#### Works Cited

- Beaufort, Anne. Writing in the Real World: Making the Transition From School to Work. New York: Teachers College P, 1999.
- Dias, Patrick, et al. Worlds Apart. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1999. 183-235
- Kiefer, Kate. "An Introduction to WAC." The WAC Clearinghouse. 1997. 4 Apr. 2008 <<http://wac.colostate.edu/intro/pop3a.cfm>>.

Sorenson, Sharon. "Encouraging Writing Achievement: Writing Across the Curriculum." *BNET Business Network*. 1991. 4 Apr. 2008  
 <[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_pris/\\_ai\\_425970539](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_pris/_ai_425970539)>.

Sturtevant, John. "Clear Communication Workshops." *The Writing Workshop*. 2008. 4 Apr. 2008  
 <<http://www.thewritingworkshop.org/>>.

Tyler, Kathryn. "Toning Up Communications: Business Writing Courses Can Help Employees and Managers Learn to Clearly Express Organizational Messages." *Goliath Business News*. 1 Mar. 2003. 4 Apr. 2008 <[http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/summary\\_0199-2566947\\_ITM](http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/summary_0199-2566947_ITM)>

**Appendix A: Student Survey**

- How well prepared do you think you are to write in the work place? (circle one)  
 1...2...3...4...5...6...7  
 Not at all Very well prepared
- How much writing do you typically do in a semester? (circle one)  
 1-5 pages.....10-20 pages.....30+ pages
- How many of the following assignments have you been asked to write total in your time at UD? For each assignment you have written, circle the number of times you have written it and for what class (if you circle other class, please list what).

Assignment	How frequently?	In what class?
Proposal	1-2 times...3-4 times...5+ times	SBA Class...English Class...Other
Report	1-2 times...3-4 times...5+ times	SBA Class...English Class...Other
Memo	1-2 times...3-4 times...5+ times	SBA Class...English Class...Other
Letter	1-2 times...3-4 times...5+ times	SBA Class...English Class...Other
Resume	1-2 times...3-4 times...5+ times	SBA Class...English Class...Other
Power Point	1-2 times...3-4 times...5+ times	SBA Class...English Class...Other
Other(please list)	1-2 times...3-4 times...5+ times	SBA Class...English Class...Other

- Have you ever had an internship or co-op at UD? (circle one)  
 Yes No
- If so, what did you write the most during you internship or co-op?

Assignment	How frequently?	On a scale of 1 to 7 how prepared did you feel to write these items?
Proposal	1-2 times...3-4 times...5+ times	1...2...3...4...5...6...7 Not at all Very well prepared

	times...5+ times	
Report	1-2 times...3-4 times...5+ times	1...2...3...4...5...6...7 Not at all Very well prepared
Memo	1-2 times...3-4 times...5+ times	1...2...3...4...5...6...7 Not at all Very well prepared
Letter	1-2 times...3-4 times...5+ times	1...2...3...4...5...6...7 Not at all Very well prepared
Resume	1-2 times...3-4 times...5+ times	1...2...3...4...5...6...7 Not at all Very well prepared
Power Point	1-2 times...3-4 times...5+ times	1...2...3...4...5...6...7 Not at all Very well prepared
Other	1-2 times...3-4 times...5+ times	1...2...3...4...5...6...7 Not at all Very well prepared
N/A		

**Appendix B: Alumni Survey**

- Upon graduation from UD, how well prepared were you to write in the workplace? (circle one)  
 1...2...3...4...5...6...7  
 Not at all Very well prepared
- How frequently do you write at work in a day? (circle one)  
 1-2 times.....3-4 times.....5+ times
- How much did you write in a week? (circle one)  
 1-5 pages.....10-20 pages.....30+ pages
- What do you write most frequently at work? (circle one)  
 Proposal  
 Report  
 Memo  
 Letter  
 Other (please explain what)
- Did you have any training at work related to writing? If so, please explain.
- How much did you typically write in a semester at UD? (circle one)  
 1-5 pages.....10-20 pages.....30+ pages

7. What preparation did you have while at UD to write in a professional setting? (circle all that apply)  
Internship  
Writing Class  
Writing in SBA Class  
Other (please explain where)
8. Which do you think was the best preparation? (circle one)  
Internship  
Writing Class  
Writing in SBA Class  
Other (please explain where)
9. What preparation do you wish you had that you didn't have?

## Classical Music vs. Pop Music: Effects on Pre-Writing

### Angelina Joseph

---

*Angelina Joseph is a civil engineering major from Youngstown, Ohio. She chose to research her topic of classical music versus pop music and their effect on the prewriting process because she wanted to see whether listening to her favorite music was helping or hurting her school work. You can contact Angelina at josephad@notes.udayton.edu.*

I have always been someone who needed to listen to music while I worked on my homework, and I wondered whether the type of music I listen to helps or hinders my prewriting process. Sometimes it seems I work faster and more efficiently while listening to some of my favorite music, while other times I feel that I am too focused on the music and not on the work I am completing. My research question is, "Does listening to classical music help first year college students with the prewriting process more than pop music helps with the prewriting process?" I had always heard that listening to classical music helps you with any writing or reading, but I want to see if listening to music that kids today are more comfortable with helps them more.

Focusing on first year students here at the University of Dayton, I created and collected surveys and completed a small case study. Using the information from these two sources along with the information I found from previous research on this topic, I hope to conclude whether or not classical music helps the writing process more than today's popular music.

#### Review of Literature

There has been a great deal of research in the past on music's effect on the way a person thinks or completes a task. There has also been research on the different styles of pre-writing, and what elements affect a person's writing. However, there is yet to be much research that combines these

topics and looks at comparing music genres while going through the pre-writing stage. This paper will focus on classical music versus pop music, seeing which one helps with the pre-writing process the most.

### *Writing Process*

The research is specifically focused on music's effect on pre-writing, seeing if it helps with the brainstorming and idea creating portion of the writing process. Pre-writing is the first stage of the writing process and according to First and MacMillan, there are four criteria that a writer must meet to successfully complete this stage. The four criteria listed are: the writer takes part in an event, gives meaning to the event, decides from what angle they will communicate the event, and develops an organizational structure pertaining to that angle (First and MacMillan 21). Pre-writing consists of any activity that encourages a person to write, and this activity can be shaped for a student's individual preferences or needs (First and MacMillan 21). There are many methods of prewriting, and in the article by First and MacMillan, they focused on clustering, which consists of grouping similar ideas together (21). Focusing more on the college writing process, Lavelle and Guarino created an inventory of factors that influenced the different writing and learning styles of the students they studied (295).

### *Classical Music*

Another major factor in this paper will be looking at the benefits of classical over pop music. Classical music's effects on the way a person thinks have been researched a great deal. Best known as the Mozart effect, it is believed that listening to classical music enhances performance on certain visual and spatial skills, and at times helps in the classroom (Črnčec; Wilson; Prior 580). In Roberta Hershenson's look at classical music, she found major gaps in spatial ability tests of those with classical music training and those without (22). Her main findings were that those who had classical music training had a greater spatial ability. The fact that those without classical music training had less of spatial abilities, leads us to believe that the training had some effect on the way

they thought or processed information. Will just listening to classical music have the same psychological advantages as formal training does? Some other studies don't think so. Tests have shown only a small gap from listening to the classical music, and they showed that there is little evidence of the Mozart effect in younger children (Črnčec; Wilson; Prior 580).

### *Distractions*

Although the topic of this paper is focusing on finding out which music genre aids pre-writing the most, for some, listening to music may just be a distraction. When students were asked to just write and develop ideas while listening to music, they were flustered and exhausted by the end from trying to process the music while processing their own thoughts (Brown 55). Depending upon what type of music is being listened to, the way a person writes will change, relating the rhythms and beats of the music to the way they express their ideas (55).

If it is true that music is more of a distraction than an aid, which one will be worse, classical or pop? Music that is more familiar to the writer (most likely pop music), may cause them to focus more of their attention on the lyrics of the music instead of what they are supposed to be brainstorming about (Brown 56). This study looked at two musicians, one classical, the other rock and roll. Researchers had them complete spatial ability tasks while listening to their own genre of music and then while listening to the other musician's style of music. There was a very small improvement while both were listening to classical, but mainly, the test results showed that the musicians did the best while listening to their own, and therefore preferred style of music (Caldwell and Riby 955).

### *Effects of Listening to Music*

Many studies have been done on the effects of music on a person's thoughts and actions. The effects music has on a person may vary between when that person is listening to their preferred style of music and when they listen to a genre they

dislike or are unfamiliar with. Music listening can enhance spatial abilities, but results depend on how a person's mood and overall attitude connects with the music being played (Schellenberg 318). In a study by Caldwell and Riby, two professional musicians completed tasks while listening to their own genre of music and then when listening to another style. The results showed that the musicians completed their tasks the most efficiently when they listened to their own music style (995).

In conclusion, after looking at previous research on music styles and their influence on accomplishing tasks, hopefully this paper will fill in the gap or research about the pre-writing process in particular. Does classical music improve pre-writing abilities better than pop music? Will the music just cause a greater distraction for the students? With the help of previous research, and upcoming tests and surveys, classical and pop music will be put to the test to determine which one, if any, aids the pre-writing process.

### **Methods**

By performing specific research methods, I hope to answer the question: Which music genre benefits the pre-writing process the most, classical or pop? To gather my data on the topic I created and distributed a survey to get a perspective of how others felt on the issue. I also performed a case study, using students who participated in the survey, to see firsthand how the different music styles affected students while completing pre-writing activities. Through my research I have compared writings to try and determine whether past research will hold true, stating that classical music aids the mind more than today's popular music styles.

### *Survey*

To get an idea of how many students actually do listen to music while doing any type of writing I created a survey (for a complete list of the survey questions, see Appendix A). I walked around the halls of Founders Hall, a co-ed freshman dorm, and went door to door, personally asking students to fill out the survey. Founders Hall is the

home to the engineering, honors, and Berry Scholars living communities, with a few other majors mixed in. I thought it would be beneficial to use people of similar majors, to see if their preferences of listening to music while working were different, since they would be working on similar homework. Since my research question puts classical music versus today's more popular music genres, such as rap, rock, and pop, I asked which style they preferred to listen to. I also asked about whether they are easily distracted while doing homework, which could result in all types of music being unhelpful while working.

I was also interested to hear what the students thought about music aiding their performance on writing. On the survey I also asked whether those who listened to music during writing did so because they felt it helped them work better. Hopefully this survey will give me a different perspective on how music affects a writer, if at all. I also used the results of the survey to get a little more background on those who will be taking part in my case study.

### *Case Study*

To find students interested in participating in the case study, I had an area at the end of the survey explaining the basic outline of what the case study would entail. I got a good number of volunteers, but only four were able to come for the set date. It worked out quite well because two of the participants were males, and the other two were females. The four that came to the case study had very different tastes in music. One preferred hip-hop and rap, another preferred pop and rock, and another preferred country. Only one of the students said that classical was her favorite, which is one of the limitations I encountered in my research. Once all the participants arrived, I explained what and how I wanted them to write (the prompts used can be found in Appendix B). They were given a prompt and fifteen minutes to do as much pre-writing as they could. They worked on the first prompt while listening to a mixture of classical music. After fifteen minutes I stopped the music and collected their work. Then I gave them a second prompt, with the same instructions, but this

time I played a mixture of popular songs (both lists of songs can be found in Appendix C).

While the students were completing both of these prompts I sat and observed them. I watched for any obvious changes between the way they were writing during the classical music and during the more popular music. After they finished the case study I looked through the papers, looking for obvious differences such as length, legibility, structure, and other visual differences. I then went through and read what they wrote, seeing if anything was an obvious influence of a song or if anything went off topic.

#### *Research Limitations*

The major research limitation that I encountered was trying to get a decent amount of people to take part in the case study. I would have preferred to have closer to eight or ten people at the study, however I do believe that the information I gathered from the four participants is substantial enough. Another limitation that goes along with the number of people I had, was trying to find a good variety of students, some who enjoy classical music, some who don't, and students that do and do not listen to music while writing. Basically I just had to work with what I had. Of the four people in the study, only one of them stated on the survey that she preferred classical music. Also, only one student said that she didn't think that music helped her while she worked, although all four of them said they did listen to music while writing.

#### *Data Analysis*

My data analysis combines all of the library research I did beforehand and all of the new information I have gained from the survey and case study. The library research gave me a good background to contrast my findings from my case study with. I can use the information I found to see if it matches anything that has already been shown in other researcher's work. This way I can see if there is a solid answer to whether pop music or classical music helps the pre-writing process, if at all.

## **Results**

### *Survey*

After all of the surveys were tallied it was interesting to see the preferences of work environments for different students. It was also interesting to see what the students thought about the impact that music had on their schoolwork. Once all the surveys were collected I tallied the answers of the 70 students who participated. When asked if they listened to music while doing homework problems or just studying, 75% of students said they do. When asked if they listen to music, watch television, do both at the same time, or none at all while specifically writing a paper, 50% of students said they listen to music. Of those students who said they do listen to music while doing homework, 74% said they do so because they feel it helps them work better.

Since my topic involves comparing classical music with today's more popular styles of music, I also asked about what music genre was the most preferred. A majority 42% said they preferred rock music, in contrast to the mere 9% that said they preferred classical music.

### *Case Study*

Four students participated in the case study. On the survey, all four answered yes to whether they listened to music while doing homework. All four of the students are freshman who live in Founders Hall, a freshman dormitory at the University of Dayton. Sam is a chemical engineering student who prefers country music, and is the only one of the four who doesn't feel that listening to music helps him work better. Ken is a mechanical engineering student who prefers hip-hop and rap music. Jenna is a business major who prefers rock and pop music. The fourth participant was Allison, a mechanical engineering major, and the only participant to prefer classical music. These four completed two pre-writing assignments while listening to different music, and I observed differences in their writing during the study and afterwards from their writings.

Sam's first pre-writing assignment, while listening to classical music, seemed to be quite easy for him. He had a lot of ideas down, all of which stayed on topic. He organized his information very well, and wrote in a neat and structured form. From observations, he seemed a little hesitant when the music first started to play, but after a while he seemed quite relaxed. He wrote steadily until the end of the fifteen minutes provided. For the second prompt, while the more popular music was being played, his writing style changed. Not only did his hand writing and overall structure of his outline change slightly, but he was quite obviously distracted by the music. Lyrics from the songs being played were written on the margins of the paper along with a few doodles. However, the quality of his writing didn't suffer, still providing solid information supporting the prompt. From what I observed, he was much more comfortable with the more popular music; however, more of his time was occupied with singing along with the songs, whereas with the classical music, he barely took his eyes off of his paper.

As for Ken, he was not as affected by the change in music. In his first pre-writing assignment, he made a good outline of ideas, all answering the question asked in the prompt. He, like Sam, wrote steadily throughout the fifteen minutes provided. The classical music didn't bother him at all, he seemed very focused. During the second part of the study, he performed much in the same way, working steadily through the fifteen minutes and creating a similarly put-together outline for the second prompt as he did for the first. There was hardly any difference in the way he went about the two separate pre-writing assignments. Neither music selection seemed to help or hinder him more than the other.

The third participant was Jenna, whose music preference leaned towards rock and pop. Her preference was quite apparent in her testing, showing a big difference in the way she wrote and acted during the playing of each music selection. Her first pre-writing assignment was organized very well into an outline of ideas for the prompt. All of her ideas were focused on what the prompt was asking and her writing was neat and orderly. In contrast, while her pre-writing was still organized in an outline during the popular music portion

of the study, she obviously hindered by the music. Her writing was sloppier, and her lack of focus showed in the numerous scratch outs, doodles, and lyrics written on the sides of the paper. There were several times while a song was playing that she would put her pen down and start singing and laughing. On the other hand, while the classical music played during the first half of the study she just did what she had to do.

The final participant was Allison, the only participant who preferred classical music. I could definitely tell that Allison enjoyed the classical music more. While working on the pre-writing for the first prompt while the classical music played she seemed very focused, using the full fifteen minutes to create a full page outline of ideas, neatly organized and clearly written. As soon as the more popular hip-hop and rock selections came on, her focus was lost and she struggled to write. Her second pre-writing paper was only half a page of scribbled ideas, all clumped in one block. About ten minutes into the writing for the popular music section, she stopped writing, obviously quite frazzled.

### Conclusion

Overall, there were some obvious changes in the writing quality and style, between when the participants were listening to classical music and when they listened to today's popular music. Of all the participants, Ken was the only one who really did not seem fazed by the music, whether it be classical or pop. Allison, on the other hand, was the other extreme. She couldn't even work on the assignment for the full amount of time given. Sam and Jenna, while still putting forth a good effort on both prompts, were both obviously distracted by the popular music, and despite their dislike of the opposing style, were the most focused when classical was being played.

This case study provides evidence that while listening to today's more popular music may relax you and put you in a better mood, in the end it tends to take away from your work. Focusing more on the familiar lyrics and fast beats, takes focus off of your paper, hurting the quality of your work. The classical music proved to be the better option of the two styles;

however, this study doesn't completely prove that it improves prewriting. It can be concluded that if students are going to listen to music while working on a paper, classical would be the way to go.

To look further into this, a larger case study with more participants could look closer at any improvement on pre-writing between listening to classical music and no music at all. Also, it would be good to look at the effects classical music would have on students that don't normally listen to music while doing homework, since all the participants in this study said they did listen to music while writing papers. A more accurate result could also be gained by doing a study of students from various grade levels, different universities, variety of majors, and variety of ethnicities to better represent the population.

#### Works Cited

- Brown, Rebecca. "Soundtracking our Selves: Teaching Creative Writing with a Musical Approach." *Interdisciplinary Humanities* 23.1 (2006): 53-7.
- Caldwell, George N., and Leigh M. Riby. "The Effects of Music Exposure and Own Genre Preference on Conscious and Unconscious Cognitive Processes: A Pilot ERP Study." *Consciousness & Cognition* 16.4 (2007): 992-6.
- Črnčec, Rudi, Sarah Wilson, and Margot Prior. "The Cognitive and Academic Benefits of Music to Children: Facts and Fiction." *Educational Psychology* 26.4 (2006): 579-94.
- First, Cynthia G., and Bob MacMillan. "Writing Process Versatility." *Intervention in School & Clinic* 31.1 (1995): 21.
- Hershenson, Roberta. "Debating THE MOZART THEORY." *New York Times* 149.51472 (2000): 22.
- Lavelle, Ellen, and Anthony J. Guarino. "A Multidimensional Approach to Understanding College Writing Processes." *Educational Psychology* 23.3 (2003): 295.
- Schellenberg, E. Glenn. "Music and Cognitive Abilities." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 14.6 (2005): 317-20.

#### Appendix A

##### Survey Questions

- 1) What music genre do you prefer? (Allowed to circle more than one)
  - a. Hip-Hip/ Rap
  - b. Pop
  - c. Alternative
  - d. Classical
  - e. Country

- f. Rock
- 2) When doing homework do you prefer...
  - a. A quiet room
  - b. Some background noise
  - c. A loud room
- 3) When writing a paper, do you...
  - a. Watch TV
  - b. Listen to music
  - c. Both a & b
  - d. None of the above
- 4) Do you listen to music while doing homework/studying?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 5) If you answered yes to #4, do you feel it helps you work better? (if you answered no, skip this question)
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 6) Are you distracted easily by noise while doing homework?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

#### Appendix B

Case study prompts:

##### Prompt 1

Newness has become our obsession. Novelty is more interesting to us than continuing with whatever is "tried and true." We discard the old so we can acquire the most recent model, the latest version, the newest and most improved formula. Often, we replace what is useful just because it is no longer new. Not only with material goods but also with cultural values, we prefer whatever is the latest trend.

Assignment: Should people always prefer new things, ideas, or values to those of the past? Support your position with reasoning and examples from studies, experience, or observations.

##### Prompt 2

Often we see people who persist in trying to achieve a particular goal, even when all the evidence indicates that they will be unlikely to achieve it. When they succeed, we consider them courageous for having overcome impossible obstacles. But when they fail, we think of them as headstrong, foolhardy, and bent on self-destruction. To many people, great effort is only worthwhile when it results in success.

Assignment: Is the effort involved in pursuing any goal valuable, even if the goal is not reached? Support your position with reasoning and examples from studies, experience, or observations.

#### Appendix C

Music selections used for the case study

Classical Music Selections

1. Romanza- *Andrea Bocelli*
2. Canon in D- *Tom Barabas*

3. Fur Elise- *Trans-Siberian Orchestra*
4. Vivere- *Andrea Bocelli*

Popular Music Selections

1. Low- *Flo Rida feat. T-Pain*
2. Before He Cheats- *Carrie Underwood*
3. Bleed it Out- *Linkin Park*
4. Over You- *Daughtry*
5. Way I Are- *Timbaland*

## “I Wasn’t Paying Attention to What I Was Thinking’: A Study of ADD and Its Impact on Academics in High School and College”

**Elizabeth McCauley**

---

Elizabeth McCauley is a Undecided Arts and Science major from Downers Grove, Illinois. She chose this topic because of personal interest. As a student with Attention Deficit Disorder, she was curious about how other students' transition process from high school to college compared to her own. You can contact her at [mccaulem@notes.udayton.edu](mailto:mccaulem@notes.udayton.edu).

Attention Deficit Disorder affects thousands of college students worldwide. Many of these students have trouble adjusting to college life. Without the pressure from parents to focus, ultimately students tend to get distracted more easily. The freedom that comes along with college isn't always a good thing. The freedom of being away from home, living in a dorm, being able to go out whenever desired, and not as much structure as a home life, leads to many more distractions in schoolwork. Eventually this could mean a decrease in one's school performance. There are several ways to treat Attention Deficit Disorder, medication being the most prevalent solution. Support from parents, students, teachers, and peers can become a motivation factor for students with this disorder to prevail and succeed.

### *What is ADD?*

ADD can be defined in many different ways. Bluma Linter defines ADD as a complex neurobiological disorder that is believed to be caused by the malfunctioning of some neurotransmitters; neurotransmitters are known as the brain's chemical messengers. The neurotransmitters because inefficient and this causes the brain to be less active on thinking tasks and results in impairment of functions of the brain. Though ADD children do not have problems with intelligence, it is more difficult for them to stay on task. Thomas Brown claims that ADD is more than a behavioral

disorder. ADD impairs children's ability to use executive functions. He states, "there are six executive functions that work together in the brain: activation, focus, effort, emotion, memory, and action" (Brown 25). Early indication of Attention Deficit Disorder will only better the child and the adequate treatment is needed. With early indication, a parent can get their child the support and if needed, medication, to help them. Getting the adequate treatment needed could take some time, so the sooner the ADD is detected, the better and faster the treatment time will be.

#### *What academic problems do students with ADD have?*

Academics can be a challenge for students with ADD, this is because, as David and Myra Sosin acknowledge, these students are easily distracted, forget things quite often, dislike paperwork, procrastinate, are messy, have problems remaining seated, and have trouble staying on task (74). These characteristics affect a student's ability to stay on track and study to the best of their ability.

"Regardless of which type of attention deficit a child might have, the basic problem in the classroom is inability to stay plugged into the learning environment" (Jordan 63). Attention deficit disorder affects the 'steady flow' of new information a student is able to retain. New facts and skills that are presented in lessons do not enter their long term memory and new experiences do not fully register in their head. Students with ADD or Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder rarely comprehend more than 30% of what occurs around them unless they drill and practice the information (65).

Some students with ADD have poor self regulation, they are not able to pay attention and manage themselves easily. Without good management skills it is difficult for students to handle school tasks along with all the other responsibilities that go along with being a child. Researchers have also found that it is more difficult for students to master new skills, new information and take new steps in social conduct (Litner).

#### *What support are students with ADD given in college?*

The transition from high school to college can be a very stressful time. Leaving one's comfort zone and moving into a place students know nothing about and aren't familiar with. One way to cope with this stress is through support. Some ways to get support include joining groups, making a plan for the future, seeing a psychiatrist, and relying on family and friends. Psychiatrists found that making a plan for the future, as a college student this can help because some of the students did not believe they could live up to the expectations set forth for them by their college. The right instructor can only help further a student's education (Bramer).

While we know a lot about attention deficit disorder and its effects on students, we do not know much about the effects on college students and the transition from high school to college. I want to know: How does the transition from high school to college affect students with ADD? What problems do students with ADD encounter when they go to college? What help is provided in college for students with ADD?

#### **Methods and Participants:**

To answer these research questions, I designed an online survey (see Appendix A) In this online survey I asked ten questions to students that are diagnosed with ADD. These questions were designed so students can answer the questions in complete sentence in an essay box. If a student was not able to answer a question, they had the option of typing 'n/a'. This survey was sent through the website SurveyMonkey. SurveyMonkey is a service provided via the internet where one can make a survey, and the responses are confidential. A link is made and sent out to the participants in the survey. This way student's identity would be protected and I would still be able to get results. I also asked if any of these students who were taking my survey, would be willing to meet with me and answer additional questions to further my research.

I emailed students that were diagnosed with ADD and asked if they would like to participate in this study. Those who were willing to participate proceeded to take the survey

provided on SurveyMonkey. Although many students said they would participate only a few students took the survey.

#### *Strengths and weaknesses of the project:*

This research project could prove to be very helpful to those who want to further their research on students with Attention Deficit Disorder. The information provided will help because of the specific information that was asked of the participants, this way the researcher will preferably get the answers they want.

This study has many more limitations than advantages. I am limited to those with ADD who are willing to take the survey. Students may receive the email and choose not to participate. Another limitation is that students may not take their medication daily, which can alter their academic experience. Without proper medication daily, students may not perform to their best ability.

Since the survey was online and confidential, I was not able to monitor the students when they were filling out the survey. Since the students were given essay boxes where they could type a response, the option of typing N/A was also available. If a student chose to write N/A, it limits the study because either the question does not pertain to them, or they do not feel comfortable answering it. Students may have not given full responses such as one word responses like yes or no, instead of a complete sentence. These limitations made it more difficult to get an accurate answer to each research question.

#### *Transition from High School to College*

Students at the University of Dayton reported similar characteristics about the transition from high school to college. Many students had problems with the amount of free time they had, which led to procrastination. The classrooms at college opposed to the classrooms in high school seemed to be a common characteristic along with larger classes with more students in them. The more students and bigger classrooms the bigger the distraction, also along with more students means a new environment which could lead to academic struggles. All of the participants still took their prescribed medicine their

first year of college, which proved difficult for some because their parents weren't with them to remind them to take their medicine.

#### *Problems students with ADD encounter*

Students with ADD have problems focusing and concentrating for long periods of time. Students at the University of Dayton were all diagnosed because of the struggles they were having in school with grades and concentrating. Students found that when they weren't on their medicine, they could not concentrate during class and were always talking to people and goofing around. This made it difficult to get class work done and perform to the best of their abilities in school. As a result of these problems many students have had to up the dosage of the medication they are taking.

There can be many problems for students with ADD and sometimes the only way to help a student is through support. The simple support from a parent or a teacher can be enough to keep a student motivated to do better and succeed.

#### *Support provided for students with ADD*

Medication seemed to be a great support factor among the students at the University of Dayton. After the students took medication, they were able to concentrate and some reported more energy throughout the day. The motivation factor was also up because of the medication they were taking. A common medication taken by the students at the University of Dayton is Adderall, which most started taking right when they were diagnosed with ADD.

In two cases, an LD (Learning Disabilities) program was provided where students could get extended time on tests and where there were tutors who helped them with homework and papers. Programs such as these can greatly increase a student's motivation.

For a student with ADD, the transition into a new environment can be difficult and without parents to help them, they need to go somewhere else for help in their academic career. At the University of Dayton, a program called LEAD is provided; the students surveyed had mixed reviews about the LEAD program. Some said the LEAD program helped

them and now they have extended time on tests which really helps. Others said that when they tried to approach the LEAD program for help, but that it was difficult to get a meeting with them.

The students at the University of Dayton overall believed that the support they received in high school helped with the transition from high school to college. With any type of support, students can further their academics and this support can be given in regards to medication, parents, programs, or even the University of Dayton's LEAD program.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, students at the University of Dayton believed that the transition from high school to college was made easier through support given in their high school career leading up to college. All the students that participated continued to take their medication throughout their first year of college. Students who were on medication found it easier to concentrate and were not as distracted by their surroundings and their procrastination levels were down. It was found that the support provided is adequate to the student's desire in many ways. Others reported that the support they would like to receive through the LEAD program was not there for them.

However, other research still needs to be done. This research was only conducted in a private university and could benefit from other colleges perspectives. A mix of private and public college's findings could greatly benefit this research.

### Works Cited

- Bramer, Jennifer, Ph.D. Succeeding in College with Attention Deficit Disorders. Plantation: Specialty P, Inc., 1996. 42-46,101-108
- Brown, T. E. "A New Approach to Attention Deficit Disorder." *Educational Leadership*, 2007. 22-27.
- Jordan, Dale R. Attention Deficit Disorder ADHD and ADD Syndromes. Austin: Pro-Ed, an International Publisher, 1988. 19-137.
- Litner, B. (2003). Teens with ADHD: The challenge of high school. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 32(3), 137-158.

### Appendix A

What year are you in school?

Freshman  
Sophomore  
Junior  
Senior

When were you first diagnosed with ADD and how did you find out you had ADD?

What if any problems did you have in high school as a result of ADD? Did you begin taking medication for your ADD? If so, did the medicine help with your problems?

What support was provided for your ADD problems in high school? Was the support effective?

Did you stay on your medication during your 1<sup>st</sup> year of college?

What problems did you have during the transition from high school to college because of your ADD?

How did you handle the problems you experienced your 1<sup>st</sup> year of college?

What support did you receive?

What support do you need that you aren't getting?

If you are willing to be contacted, please put your name and e-mail address in the box provided.

## **Annoying Parents? They Actually May Have Been Academically Motivating**

**Kathryn McIlwain**

---

*Kathryn McIlwain is an Early Childhood Education major from Fort Wayne, Indiana. She chose to research past parental involvement and its effects on the academic motivations and successes of college students at the University of Dayton because for her future profession, she wanted to know how important parental involvement is for student achievement. You can contact Kathryn at [mcilwaka@notes.udayton.edu](mailto:mcilwaka@notes.udayton.edu).*

Why do some students get better grades than others? Research suggests that parental involvement is essential to the motivations and literacy successes of students: "A child's capacity for learning is not determined at birth and there is a great deal parents and educators can do about it" (Strickland 87). In our world today, it is necessary to be literate in order to be successful. Parental involvement plays a large role in literacy learning and education. Parental involvement is the participation of parents in every facet of children's education and development from birth to adulthood, recognizing that parents are the primary influence in children's lives ("What is Parent Involvement?" 1). It can take place both at home and at school. At home, parents can help with and review their children's homework, and they can talk with their children about what is going on at school. Parents can be involved at school by attending field trips and by attending conferences to talk to their children's teachers. Fathers and mothers who are actively involved in their children's educational lives have children who are more academically motivated in comparison to children whose parents are not involved with their schoolwork at all.

### *Best Level of Parental Involvement*

Many people have wondered what extent of parental involvement is best. Research shows that "when parents adopt an authoritative parenting style (i.e., high demandingness

coupled with strong support) and are not overly controlling, children tend to respond with more autonomous motivation in school, achieve at higher levels, and have greater feelings of competence" (Urduan et al. 8). This is the best possible balance of involvement for which parents should strive for. These parents are not forceful, nor do they control their children and make them do things that they do not want to do. When parents are too involved with their children's academic life, it can often be detrimental. Parents who are overbearing cause their children to be stressed and not perform as well as they normally would (Urduan et al. 9). Studies suggest that home learning activities for young children should be short but done frequently (Padak and Rasinski 293).

### *Results of Positive Parental Involvement*

When parents are actively involved in their children's literacy learning and academic life, their children tend to perform better in school and have high academic motivations. Students from homes where parents engage with them in literacy activities are better prepared for school (Strickland 86). Parents who take part in special activities for their children have children who receive better grades and have stronger academic motivations. When parents do things such as volunteer at school, attend school meetings, and help their children with their homework, the children enjoy school more and participate in more extracurricular activities. Involved parents have children who have increased "cognitive abilities, higher self-esteem, and greater social competence" (Clark 14).

There are two kinds of literacy practices at home, formal and informal. The goal of informal literacy activities is to convey the message that is contained in the reading. An informal approach would be the parent adding to the significance of a story or their child questioning what specific words he or she does not understand. In a formal approach, the parent would name and sound out certain words or letters (Sénéchal 446). When parents read with their children or listen to their children read to them, the students' reading skills are strengthened. When parents use uncommon terminology when they talk to their children, they build a stronger and bigger vocabulary. When students have a more

advanced vocabulary, they also tend to achieve higher in reading (Strickland 87).

#### *Results of Not Enough Parental Involvement*

Time restrictions, lack of monetary resources, spousal relationships, and work schedules of parents are significant factors connected to disengaged parents. When parents are not involved in their children's lives, the children tend to perform more poorly than those children whose parents are involved. The most common of these cases takes place in urban, inner-city settings. Parents of children in inner-city schools often lack the money to spend on things such as books. In fact, 44 million adults do not have the proper reading skills to read a story to their children. Their children are often also illiterate, leaving them at a huge disadvantage when they start school, often because they do not have the necessary materials such as books. Students whose parents are not involved tend to be less motivated since they never had a parental figure making sure they did their best (Cooter 698).

While we know a lot about why parental involvement is important to the literacy motivations and academic successes of students while living at home, we do not know much about the long-term effects of parental involvement on college students. Does past parental involvement help shape the present work ethics of college students? Do students whose parents were actively involved in their lives when they lived at home still perform in the same way at college? I designed a study to examine how early parental involvement affects the study skills and grade point averages of first-year college students at the University of Dayton.

#### **Participants and Methods**

I created a survey that consisted of twenty-three questions that asked about the level of parental involvement in the past and their present motivations and attitudes towards academics (see appendix A). I used a Likert Scale to survey attitudes and opinions about the questions I asked. For example, students were asked to answer questions based on a ranking scale of "too little" to "too much." I began my surveying at the end of January 2008 and ended it in early

February 2008. I wanted a variety of responses, so I decided to survey a large number of people.

One hundred first-year college students from the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio participated in my study. The University of Dayton is a private, Marianist school that has a student population of about ten thousand. The students were from different parts of the country, but most lived in Ohio and its surrounding states. Both male and female first-year students participated in my study.

I analyzed the data by creating a spreadsheet that listed every respondent's answers according to their surveys. I categorized the data according to topic, which was a lengthy process because of the large number of surveys that I had to evaluate. For example, I compared the answers to the questions about grade point averages to those about parents studying with their children or checking over their homework in the past. I also compared the amount of time their parents spent reading to the amount of time that students read in their free time.

#### *Advantages and Limitations of this Study*

This study is helpful for teachers, parents, and students. It gives insights on the students' attitudes about past parental involvement and how it has affected their present motivations. The study provides us with specific information regarding past and present academic achievement. It also lets us know to what extent college students at the University of Dayton think their parents were involved. Another advantage was that the surveys were completed early enough in the students' college careers that they can more easily remember events which helped form their opinions.

The study seemed to have more limitations than advantages. My study was limited because a majority of the students who participated in the survey were Caucasian. They were mainly from middle- to upper-middle-class families. Even though a large number of people were surveyed, a majority of the respondents gave similar answers, likely because of their similar backgrounds.

I did not monitor the students as they filled out the surveys. A problem with Likert Scale-type questions is that

they do not always elicit the really significant information on a specific topic. Some may have filled out answers that were not the full truth for various reasons. They may not have wanted to disclose their true grade point average, or they may have wanted to cover up something about which they were ashamed. I asked questions about parental involvement, and students may have had different perceptions of this word. Also, I asked a few questions dating back to their junior-high years. Some participants may not have truly remembered what they did back then, therefore they would have responded with an answer that best described what they thought had happened.

#### **Kinds and Amount of Past Parental Involvement**

First-year students at the University of Dayton reported similar kinds of past parental involvement. Parents studied for tests and quizzes with their students, and they helped them with homework. Parents attended school-related meetings, and they participated in other activities, such as field trips.

70 percent of students had parents that checked over their homework during middle school and high school. 78 percent of students reported that their parents helped them study for tests during the middle to high school years. 97 percent of those surveyed said that their parents participated in academic school events, such as meetings, at least one to two times a year. 85 percent of the first-year students reported that their parents participated in events such as field trips.

#### *How Important Do Students Think Past Parental Involvement is?*

First-year college students at the University of Dayton think that past parental involvement affects their motivations and work ethics. Out of 100 students surveyed, 87 percent said that past parental involvement has affected or greatly affected their study habits, in the past and in the present; 13 percent reported that their study habits were somewhat affected by past parental involvement.

81 percent the students surveyed said that past parental involvement has affected or greatly affected their

present academic motivations in college. 19 percent responded that they are somewhat affected because of past involvement. Only 26 percent of students reported having a lower GPA in college than they did in high school. The rest maintained a GPA in the same range in college as they did during high school, and 3 percent reported that their grades went up.

#### *Differences in Performance*

Is there a difference in GPA between students who had high past parental involvement and those with lower past parental involvement? Out of the 19 percent of students who said they were somewhat affected by past parental involvement, 16 percent responded that they had a lower GPA in college than they did in high school. As for the 81 percent who said that they were affected or greatly affected because of past parental involvement, 67 percent of them said they have the same GPA in college as they did in high school. So, there is a difference in GPA amongst students who had parents who were more involved than others.

#### *Are Students Happy with the Level of Involvement?*

A vast majority of those surveyed believed that their parents were involved enough in their academic life, both in the present and in the past. 98 percent of those surveyed responded that they agreed or strongly agreed that parents were involved enough in their academic life. Only 2 percent of the students said that they did not agree that their parents were involved enough in their academic lives. That same 2 percent also stated that their parents were involved "too little." The rest of those surveyed, which was 98 percent of the students, said that their parents were involved "just to the right extent." Not a single student said that their parents were involved "too much."

Parents who were involved in their child's academic life often asked questions about how their school day was, what their grades are, and whether or not he or she is keeping up in school. Overall, the majority of first-year students at the University of Dayton feel as if their parents were appropriately involved in their academic lives.

### *Parents as Readers Themselves*

Out of the 100 students surveyed, 60 percent said that their parents read a lot. 55 percent of the students whose parents read often said that they personally read about one to two books a month on their own time. Out of the 40 percent who reported that their parents do not read a lot, 15 percent of students said they also enjoy reading one to two books a month for leisure. Many students expressed that they would like to read more, but they simply do not have the time due to schoolwork and activities.

Parents who read a lot have children who enjoy reading for leisure. Many parents do not realize that they are influencing their children when they read. The parents who do not read have children who do not read as much in comparison to the children of the parents who read a lot.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I have learned that students at the University of Dayton tend come from homes where parents were really involved, and their parents read a lot. This does make a difference in students' academic lives, though not always in ways that I had expected. Students believed that past parental involvement has influenced their present academic motivations and efforts. Students whose parents checked over their homework or helped them study in the past, believe that their present academic motivations were affected by the help of their parents. Past and present academic successes of the students were also influenced by the level of involvement.

Teachers and parents can learn a lot from this study. Teachers should realize that since parental involvement does affect a student's life academically, students will perform differently. Parents should realize that they are the single-most influential factors in their children's lives. Many parents do not realize when they read a lot that they are setting an example for their children. I learned that parents who read have an impact on their children as readers. Parents do not necessarily have to read to their children, but just the act of the children seeing the parents reading is what matters.

However, other research still needs to be done. This research was only done in a private college whose attendees all come from a similar background. Studies need to be done on a public university to see how the findings compare to those of this study.

### **Works Cited**

- Clark, Christina. "Father Involvement and Children's Literacy Outcomes." *Literacy Today* 42 (2005): 14-5.
- Cooter, Kathleen S. "When Mama can't Read: Counteracting Intergenerational Illiteracy." *Reading Teacher* 59.7 (2006): 698-702.
- Padak, Nancy, and Timothy Rasinski. "Home-School Partnerships in Literacy Education: From Rhetoric to Reality." *Reading Teacher* 60.3 (2006): 292-6.
- Sénéchal, Monique, and Jo-Anne LeFevre. "Parental Involvement in the Development of Children's Reading Skill: A Five-Year Longitudinal Study." *Child development* 73.2 (2002): 445.
- Strickland, Dorothy S. "Working with Families as Partners in Early Literacy." *Reading Teacher* 58.1 (2004): 86-8.
- Urdan, Tim, Monica Solek, and Erin Schoenfelder. "Students' Perceptions of Family Influences on their Academic Motivation: A Qualitative Analysis." *European Journal of Psychology of Education - EJPE* 22.1 (2007): 7-21.
- "What is Parent Involvement?." *Parent Teacher Association of Connecticut*. 01 06 2008. Connecticut PTA. 27 Jan 2008 [http://www.ctpta.org/parenting/parent\\_involvement.htm](http://www.ctpta.org/parenting/parent_involvement.htm)

### **Appendix A** **Parental Involvement Survey**

1. **Gender:**
2. **Originally From:**
3. **Year in School:**
4. **Would you describe your high school as private or public?**
5. **Would you describe your high school as urban or suburban?**
6. **How many hours a day did you study in high school?**  
5 hours or more.....3-4 hours.....1-2 hours.....none
7. **How many hours a day do you study in college?**  
5 hours or more.....3-4 hours.....1-2 hours.....none
8. **How often did your parents check over your homework in junior high?**  
5 times a week.....3-4 times a week.....1-2 times a week.....never
9. **How often did your parents check over your homework in high school?**  
5 times a week.....3-4 times a week.....1-2 times a week.....never

10. How often did they study for tests with you in grade school?  
5 or more times a week.....3-4 times a week.....1-2 times a week.....never
11. How often did they study for tests with you in high school?  
5 or more times a week.....3-4 times a week.....1-2 times a week.....never
12. How often did your parents participate in academic school events, such as meetings?  
5 or more times a year.....3-4 times a year.....1-2 times a year.....never
13. How often did your parents participate in academic school events, such as field trips?  
5 or more times a year.....3-4 times a year.....1-2 times a year.....never
14. What was your final GPA in high school?  
4.0 or above.....3.0-3.9.....2.0-2.9.....1.0-1.9
15. What is your GPA now?  
4.0.....3.0-3.9.....2.0-2.9.....1.0-1.9
16. How would you best describe your parents' level of involvement in junior high?  
very involved.....involved.....somewhat involved.....not involved
17. How would you best describe your parents' level of involvement in high school?  
very involved.....involved.....somewhat involved.....not involved
18. How greatly has past parental involvement affected your present study habits?  
very greatly.....greatly.....somewhat.....no affect
19. How greatly has past parental involvement affected your present academic motivations in college?  
very greatly.....greatly.....somewhat.....no affect
20. Do you think that your parents were involved enough in your academic life?  
strongly agree.....agree.....somewhat agree.....do not agree
21. To what extent were your parents involved?  
too much.....just right.....too little
22. Do your parents read a lot? (Themselves as readers, not reading to you)  
yes.....no
23. How often did you read a book in your own free time?  
5 or more times a month.....3-4 times a month.....1-2 times a month.....never

## Game Over? How Video Games Impact Literacy

Jason Petermann

*Jason Petermann is an undecided Arts and Science major from Lake Zurich, Illinois. He did a correlational study on the relationship between video game play, grades in English class, and attitude towards reading. He wanted to know if playing too many video games had a negative effect on grades and high school students' grades in English class and attitude towards reading. You can contact Jason at [petermjm@notes.udayton.edu](mailto:petermjm@notes.udayton.edu).*

Video games are one of the most popular toys on the market. Many children will play them for hours on end, day after day, just trying to beat a game or get to the next level. It is a common misconception that children are just wasting their time. Parents think that if a child spends a lot of time doing something, then it must be harming them in some way (Deutsch 54). Researchers have proven that this misconception is wrong and children are actually learning when they play video games. Researchers are also trying to bring video games into the classroom because research has shown it provides fearless learning, they engage students, they open up new worlds, and they promote many different types of learning. This paper will discuss research that has been done on the correlation between video games and learning as well as research that I have done on the correlation between video games and reading.

### *Fearless Learning*

When children play video games, they are not afraid to make a mistake or get a "game over" because there are no real world consequences (Compton-Lilly 719). This however cannot be said in a classroom environment. Children approach video games differently than they approach school work (719). If a child struggles at school work, he will not volunteer in class because he will be afraid of making mistakes and becoming embarrassed. Research suggests that

if video games were brought into the classroom, children would not be afraid to take risks because they know they could just try again and maybe even try out different strategies to solve problems. Having them in the classroom would make for a better learning environment (Beavis, 240). Children learn better when they are actively involved in what they are doing. Playing video games would motivate a child to play well and win, and he will try as many times as it takes to succeed in a video game (Compton-Lilly 719). Video games also enhance children's creativity because they take them out of their own world and put them into one with endless possibilities and many different choices.

#### *Practice Makes Perfect*

Ninety percent of American households with children have rented or own video or computer games (Anderson, et al 9). Children enjoy playing video games, so they practice a lot until they become very good at playing them. If video games were brought into the classroom, the children would enjoy the class more because they would be playing a game while they were learning how to read without realizing it (Compton-Lilly 723). They would also be more motivated to do well because they would not want to lose the game. If a child is having fun playing video games in class, he will want to do this at home, too. Usually when a child learns something at school and is not given any homework on it, he will forget because he has no way to practice it. Children play video games all the time and they can be learning outside of the classroom. Video games are important for broadening a child's mind because they will let him think and act in new ways. In a classroom, when a child is playing a game, he is encouraged to talk about what is happening and plan what he will do next. A child is also eager to learn when he is playing video games because he will be having fun and not be bored with what he is learning.

#### *New Worlds*

When children play video games, they have the opportunity to play by themselves or with other people. Children can also hook their video game systems up to the

internet so they can play with other players from around the world. Playing with other players teaches the children some very valuable skills. They have to learn how to work as a team to defeat the enemy; they also might have to lead the team in making a difficult decision. And if the decision turns out to have been the wrong one, they can always start over. These video games teach children skills that will need in real life situations (Gee 169).

#### *Types of Learning*

Researchers have not only found that video games trigger learning, but they also have been able to pin point the various types of learning. Video games engage many different parts of a child's mind and use many different types of learning and enhance practical skills (Aguilera, et al). Video games help a child's problem solving and decision making skills develop. When a child is playing a game, he can get himself into some difficult situations and has to choose which way to try and get out. Another type of learning video games enhance is logical thinking. They will propose strategies and get a child to think about how to solve certain problems. These games also promote many other kinds of learning in children ranging from basic knowledge to very strategic planning. Video games can also promote reading if it is related to a video game such as a comic book or other fictional literature. There are also many magazines and strategy guides a child could read about video games.

#### **Methods**

Although many studies have been done to find the relationship between video games and learning (Anderson, Beavis, Compton-Lilly, Deutsch, Gee, Hae-Jung, Mendiz, Miguel), not many studies have covered the correlation between reading and video games. I wanted to find out if video games and reading are connected in any way. Specifically I wanted to know the answers to these questions:

1. Does the amount of video games played in grade school have an influence on how a child feels about reading?

2. Does the amount of video games played in grade school affect a child's grades in English?
3. Does the amount of video games played in high school have an influence on how a student feels about reading?
4. Does the amount of video games played in high school affect a student's grades in English?
5. Did playing a lot of video games as a child affect the way a person feels about reading in college?

To answer these research questions, I designed a survey (see Appendix A). I distributed this survey to first-year college students at the University of Dayton. I handed out forty surveys to first-year men and forty surveys to first-year women. I collected my data over a period of about two weeks. Forty is a sufficient number to begin painting the picture of the relationship between video games and reading, and is manageable for the amount of time I had to conduct the research. I have the surveys separated between men and women so I can get results for both because I think that is relevant for this study.

I used surveys because I was looking for a large sample of the first year students' opinions and attitudes towards this subject. An interview or a case study would only give me the opinions of one or two people, and I could not make a generalization based on that. For several of the questions on the survey, I used a Likert Scale because I wanted to get the students attitudes and opinions towards reading and video games.

Some strengths of the surveys are that they give accurate results of the relationship between video game play and reading. They also are easy to analyze. It can be measured on a large scale. A weakness of the surveys is that they do not really go into detail since the answers are not explained. The students just answered initial questions, but there were no follow up interviews or clarification questions. Another weakness is I only surveyed forty male and forty female students. A good generalization cannot be made from that many surveys. If I want a more accurate answer, I will need to survey many more people. Another weakness is that

students could have been dishonest and not expressed their actual beliefs on the survey.

I think that parents and educators can benefit from my research. My research will show if there is a correlation between video games, grades in English class, and time spent reading. If there is some sort of negative correlation then parents can act accordingly and possibly limit how much their child plays video games. If there is no correlation or a positive correlation than it shows that parents do not need to worry about how often their children are playing video games, and educators could maybe start incorporating them into the class room.

### Results

I did not find a correlation between the amount of time spent playing video games, grades in English class, and amount of time spent reading. This section is organized so that I will discuss the results of the grade school students first, then the results of the high school students. This is a chart of the average answers of the students that took the survey.

	<b>Time Spent Playing Video Games per Week</b>	<b>Grades in English Class</b>	<b>Time Spent Reading per Week</b>
<b>Boys</b>	6-10 hours in grade and high school	A's and B's in grade and high school	1-2 hours a week in
<b>Girls</b>	0-5 hours In grade and high school	A's and B's in grade and high school	3-4 hours a week in grade school 1-2 hours a week in high school

The boys spent more time playing video games than the girls. In grade and high school the average video game play by girls was between 0 and 5 hours per week. Most of the boys in grade and high school spent between 6 and 10 hours a week playing video games. The girls and boys grades

were mainly A's and B's in grade and high school. Most of the girls read between 3 and 4 hours a week in grade school and between 1 and 2 hours a week in high school. The boys on the other hand, read between 1 and 2 hours per week in both grade and high school. 65% of the male students said they read occasionally for pleasure in college while 70% of the female students said that they read occasionally for pleasure in college.

#### Grade School

	Grades in English Class	Time Spent Reading Per Week
<b>Boys</b>	<b>Gamers:</b> 63% received A's and B's while 37% received B's and C's <b>Non-Gamers:</b> 66% received A's and B's while 34% received B's and C's	<b>Gamers:</b> 1-2 hours per week <b>Non-Gamers:</b> 1-2 hours per week
<b>Girls</b>	<b>Gamers:</b> 90% received A's and B's <b>Non-Gamers:</b> 100% received A's B's	<b>Gamers:</b> 1-2 hours per week <b>Non-Gamers:</b> 1-2 hours per week

In grade school, there was no difference in time spent reading per week between girls that played video games and girls that did not. 90% of the girls that took my survey said they played between 0 and 5 hours of video games per week during grade school. 65% of these girls that played between 0 and 5 hours a week read between 1 and 2 hours a week. 100% of the girls that said they played more than 6 hours of video games per week in grade school also said that they read 1 to 2 hours per week. 78% of the male students said they played more than six hours a week during grade school. Of that group, 43% said they played more than 11 hours a week

during grade school. In grade school the 78% of males who said they played video games for more than 6 hours a week read on average only about 1 to 2 hours a week. The non-video gamers did not read very often in grade school either. They read on average about 2 hours a week. Therefore, there appears to be no correlation between the amount grade school males read and the amount of time they spent playing video games.

There was a very small difference in English grades between girls that played video games and girls that did not. The girls that said they did not play video games in grade school all got A's and B's. 90% of the girls that played between 0 and 5 hours of video games per week in grade school got A's and B's while 10% received a lower grade. The English grades of gamers and non-gamers for males in grade school were fairly similar. There appeared to be no correlation between the amount of time a student spent playing video games and his grades in English class. Of the 78% of male gamers in grade school, 63% of them said they achieved A's and B's while 37% said they earned B's and C's. Of the non gamers in grade school, 66% said they earned A's and B's while 34% earned B's and C's. What is interesting though is that the only two students who took the survey and said they played more than fifteen hours of video games per week in grade school did not earn A's.

#### High School

	Grades in English Class	Time Spent Reading per Week
<b>Boys</b>	<b>Gamers:</b> 60% received A's and B's <b>Non-Gamers:</b> 60% received A's and B's	<b>Gamers:</b> 30% read less than 1 hour while 35% read 3-4 hours <b>Non-Gamers:</b> 60% read 1-2 hours while 30% read 3-4
<b>Girls</b>	<b>Gamers:</b> N/A <b>Non-Gamers:</b> N/A	<b>Gamers:</b> : 60% read 1 - 2 hours

	*Not enough girls played video games to answer this question accurately.	<b>Non-Gamers:</b> 60 % read 1-2 hours while 30% read 3-4
--	--	---

High school video game play was very similar to grade school game play for the girls. They still did not play video games very often. Only 15% said they played more than six hours per week while 85% played between zero and five hours per week. Of the non-video game players, 60% read between one and two hours per week and 30% read between three to four hours per week. 60% of the girls that played video games in high school read between 1 and 2 hours per week. The boys did not play as many video games in high school as they did in grade school. 65% of the male students surveyed said that they played more than 6 hours a week during high school. Of these 65% of male students, 55% of them said they played more than eleven hours a week and 20% said they played more than fifteen hours a week. Surprisingly, these gamers also seemed to read more. About 30% of the gamers said they read less than 1 hour per week while about 35% said they read about 3 to 4 hours a week. The non-gamers did less reading than the avid video game players in high school. Only 20% of the non-gamers read for more than 3 hours per week during high school. 60% of the non-gamers read between 1 and 2 hours per week during high school.

There was no relationship between the amount a high school girl plays video games and her grades in English class. Not enough girls played video games to show any real connection between the two. The high school grades were roughly the same between the gamers and the non-gamers for the boys. About 60% of the men who took the survey earned A's and B's in English regardless of if they played video games or not. There is not enough evidence to support a correlation between video games played in high school and grades earned in English class.

The results of my study show that there does not appear to be a relationship between playing video games and grades in English class or amount of time spent reading per

week. Even if the students played a lot of video games, they still were able to maintain A's and B's in English. The students who played a lot of video games also enjoyed reading just about as much as the students who did not play video games. There were some interesting findings, such as the fact that many of the boys who played video games in grade school played even more in high school, and that the two students who played the most video games out of every one surveyed did not earn A's. However, more data is needed to see if excessive gaming leads to lower English grades.

There is definitely room for more studies to be done on my topic. However, my study found that parents do not need to worry about how often their child is playing video games. Also, I found if a child is not interested in reading, it is not because he is playing too many video games. The myth that video games are detrimental is wrong. Video games will not cause children to fail in school or to resist reading. I found that a student can be very smart and get great grades and love to read while still being considered a "gamer".

Research has shown that video games can actually be beneficial as well. As mentioned earlier, researchers have found that video games trigger many different types of learning and enhance practical skills. Video games can be used in the classroom to create fearless learning and "fun" homework. So the next time your child picks up a video game controller, realize they are going to learn something while having a great time.

#### Works Cited

- Aguilera, Miguel, and Alfonso Mendiz. "Video Games and Education." *ACM Computers in Entertainment* 1. 1 (2003). 1-11.
- Anderson, Jane, Elisa Hac-Jung. "Violence in Video Games May Harm Children". *Video Games*. Ed. Roman Espejo. Farmington hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2003. 9-17.
- Beavis, Catherine. "Computer games, culture and curriculum." *Page to Screen*. Ed. Ilana Snyder. New York: Routledge, 1998. 234-253.
- Compton-Lilly, Catherine. "What Can Video Games Teach Us About Teaching Reading?" *The Reading Teacher* 60. 8 (2007): 719-726.
- Deutsch, David. "Playing Video Games Benefits Children". *Video Games*. Ed. Roman Espejo. Farmington hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2003. 54- 60
- Gee, James. "Learning by Design: Games as Learning Machines." *Interactive Educational Multimedia* 8 (2004): 15-23.

Gee, James. What Video Games Have To Teach Us About Learning And Literacy. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

#### Appendix A

##### Survey

1. **Are you male or female?**  
Male            Female
2. **How many hours a week did you play video games in grade school?**  
0-5 6-10 11-15 15-20 20+
3. **How many hours a week did play video games in high school?**  
0-5 6-10 11-15 15-20 20+
4. **What types of video games did you play? (circle all that apply)**  
Sports games  
Action/adventure games  
Racing games  
Computer games such as (Sims, Roller coaster tycoon, Warcraft, and Starcraft)  
Did not play video games
5. **How were your grades in English in grade school?**  
A's and B's  
B's and C's  
C's and D's  
D's and F's
6. **How were your grades in English in high school?**  
A's and B's  
B's and C's  
C's and D's  
D's and F's
7. **How often did you read for pleasure in grade school?**  
Never (0 hours)    Sometimes (1-2 hours)    Often (3-4 hours)  
All the time (5 + hours)
8. **How often did you read for pleasure in high school?**  
Never (0 hours)  
Sometimes (1-2 hours)  
Often (3-4 hours)  
All the time (5 + hours)
9. **What is your attitude towards reading now?**  
Hate it  
Read sometimes  
Enjoy it very much
10. **What kinds of reading do you like? (circle all that apply)**  
Fiction books  
Non-fiction books  
Magazines  
Newspapers

## Technical Literacy of Humanities Professors

### Michael Rooths

---

*Michael Rooths Jr. is a computer engineering major from Englewood, Ohio. He chose to research the technical literacy of university professors because he enjoys using technology in the classroom but has noticed that most teachers don't integrate technology well. Michael was interested in finding out where the breakdown occurs. You can contact Michael at roothsmz@notes.udayton.edu.*

Technology has been an important part of my life ever since my parents bought our first computer years ago. My uses of technology today have evolved since then but are not that different from my peer's usage. From day to day I use technology to stay current with what's going on in the world, keep in touch with distant friends and family on social networks, and stay productive in school. Most, if not all, my technical expertise is self taught. My teachers were not knowledgeable enough with certain technologies to facilitate my technical development. My interest has always been in technology. As a result I spent much of my time outside of class figuring out new technologies that would help me spend less time on homework and more time doing what I loved. Some of the technologies I use help me in the areas of math, science, programming, English, and history. This is what led me to research the technical literacy's of college professors; to examine why and where the breakdown in their technical background occurred.

#### Literature Review

Technology has played an important role in education over the past 100 years (Akmal; Oaks; Barker). The Federal government recognized the impact technology plays in education and over the past decade, they have invested heavily in Technology Education initiatives to keep up with technology (Lawless;

Pellegrino). Every year new products make life easier for some and more complicated for others. Students benefit from technological advancements in the form of software that simplifies their work. For example, almost every two years Microsoft© releases an update to their productivity software suit Microsoft Office©. Within the updates are features that make a previously tedious task, like an annotated bibliography, simple. Another recent example is the availability of lectures now on iTunes©. With technology changing every year, Technology Education is very important.

### *Technology Education*

Technology Education is not defined exactly. But through dialogue with this discourse community, one would define Technology Education as the training of students on how to correctly utilize all technology at their disposal. However, for students to be correctly trained, teachers, at all levels, must be correctly instructed and educated on the available technologies. It comes down to either having the technical literacy or acquiring the technical literacy to help facilitate technology use.

Technology Education is being given more and more attention by researchers. Many of the published works focus on teachers and how technology has impacted them. The overarching argument present is that if teachers are not adequately trained, the “digital divide” will continue to grow (Lawless; Pellegrino 578). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century students from every background will have access to a varied assortment of technologies (Lawless; Pellegrino 578). The assortment of available technologies indicates teachers will have to update their technical literacy arsenal to stay current and keep America’s future competitive.

### *Opinions on Teacher Literacy*

There are varying opinions on whether teachers are being educated properly on how they can effectively integrate the technology their students are, or need to be, using into their curriculum. The most commonly held

view is teachers are not being adequately trained. Startling statistics offer support for this claim.

In a survey of state supervisors of Technology Education, where Technology Educators of pre-college levels (K-12) were of concern, the states surveyed had an average of 500 state wide Technology Educators (Akmal; Oaks; Barker 13). Of the 39 states surveyed, 1 state indicated Technology Education is not even recognized as an important area of concern, 4 states indicated Technology Education is not given priority in the state, 30 states said Technology Education was not a requirement, and finally 11 of the states said Technology Education programs are not positively impacting the students in that state (Akmal; Oaks; Barker). The most shocking finding is that 11 of the states claimed Technology Education programs currently in use were not improving students’ technical literacy. It is clear that professional development for teachers educating them on proper ways to integrate technology into curricula, is not taking place.

Teachers must be given adequate professional development opportunities if they are to keep pace with student’s technical abilities, upgrade existing teaching techniques and efficiently integrate technology into their curricula (Lawless; Pellegrino 575). But they aren’t being given the opportunities to improve. Of 39 states surveyed, 35 indicated they only had one to five state-wide Technology Educator preparation programs and another 3 indicated they did not have any programs at all (Akmal; Oaks; Barker). If “the demand for technology education [instructors] has increased” over the past decade yet, as indicated by states surveyed, “the number of teacher preparation programs for technology education” has decreased (Akmal; Oaks; Barker 14). How are teachers expected to stay modern in their teaching methods? These findings support the claim that current teachers of levels K-12 are not being adequately prepared. However, there is no research that deals with whether college professors also fall into this category.

### *Conclusion of Review of Literature*

My intention is to find whether a lack of technology integration in curriculum occurs, and to what degree, on the university level. A look at humanities professors' technology integration in curriculum will be conducted. The findings will show whether their technical literacies are adequate by viewing what technologies they use in their classroom and to what extent they use those technologies.

## **Methods**

### *Introduction*

The empirical research was carried out over a two week period. The participants were given the survey on week one and allowed time to forget about their answers. They were not informed that there was to be a follow-up interview during week two so that they would answer the questions without prior meditation.

### *Participants*

The participants in my study were Humanities professors. They were a mixture of novice and veteran professors, who taught subjects in History, English, Language, and Philosophy. I chose these professors at random but with intention. I sought veteran professors and novice professors because the novice professors would either help refute or reinforce the library research I conducted on whether teachers are adequately prepared by their institutions to integrate technology in the classroom. The participants were also professors I have had no previous contact with before my study. If I knew the professors beforehand that could have made me biased and/or hesitant in my analysis of the findings.

### *Collection of Data: Survey*

The data collection initially consisted of a survey. The survey had 6 questions all dealing with some aspect of the subjects technology use in the classroom. I asked the participants if they used technology and if so what level they would rate technology use. The ratings were based on a scale that I created (See Appendix A).

A light technology user would rarely (1-2 days out of the week) use PowerPoint and email to communicate with their students outside of class. A medium technology integrator uses PowerPoint more frequently (3-4 days out of the school week) and has graphics as well as text integrated in the presentation. The medium integrator also uses email to communicate to students and there would be some use of WebCT. The heavy technology integrator uses technology everyday of the week. The PowerPoint of this type of professor would include graphics, text, and some type of video or sound that aided the curriculum. WebCT was utilized to its full potential which would include posting homework and maintaining a running calendar so that students knew when assignments were due. They used blogs and websites to reinforce the curriculum. The professors in this category use AOL Instant Messenger to help students with quick questions and also used e-portfolios or planned to use e-portfolios to make the class paperless and more environmentally friendly.

### *Interview*

The interview portion of the data collection was used in conjunction with the survey. The survey was intended to weed out professors that either were not willing to cooperate or that used technology similar to the other professors of interest. In the interview the participants were asked to expound on the answers given in their survey (See Appendix B). This is where all of the relevant data came from. In the interviews I conducted I only looked at a small manageable sampling of those participants surveyed. Two novice teachers (less than 1 year experience) and two veteran teachers (more than 20 years experience) were interviewed. In the interview I would ask the participant to further explain an answer and the conversation would take different forms based on different answers and points the participant brought up.

### *Limitations*

The limitations of this research would include exaggerations on the survey, limited sampling of participants, and the way some questions were asked on paper. The exaggerations on the survey were minimized because of the

information gathered during the interview showed that they were either over or underestimating their technology usage in the classroom. The limited sampling could be counteracted by surveying and interviewing more professors. However, researching more participants was not a realistic option for me because of time restrictions. The questions asked during the interview were posed in a way that minimized partiality and bias in language but there is always a chance that some unspoken queues could have been guiding the participants' responses.

### Results

Chris Burnside, one of the novice professors I interviewed, who was still in his first year of teaching. He teaches 37 students in his English 102 course. When I asked him whether the number of students he teaches affected his use of technology he responded by saying the small number of students doesn't necessitate heavy technology usage. The small number makes it easier to just pass out handouts on paper. The next question I asked him was whether technology made his life easier or harder. He stated that technology made his life easier because it helped him teach. He was able to do his lesson plans on the computer along with keeping an electronic grade book online. His use of PowerPoint was limited to just visual aids but he communicated to his students via-email at times and was knowledgeable in Excel. His limited use of email was an outcome of a negative experience he had with the technology. He said that students sometimes don't clean out their inboxes and the emails bounce back. On the survey I asked him to describe his technical ability in one word and he chose "Proficient". However, when I asked him to explain his word choice in the interview he came off as having more of an advanced level of technical ability. His underestimation of his technical ability was made blatantly clear when he said that he was redesigning the English department's website. In addition to redesigning the department's website, he said he wanted to move to a paperless style of teaching. To do this he said that he would need to upload assignments on the web and utilize other technologies, like WebCT, that are available on campus. My

final question was whether he was formally trained in college on how to use and integrate technology in the classroom and he responded by saying he was self taught.

Kelly Whitney was the other novice teacher I interviewed and it was also her first year teaching. She felt as though the number of students she taught was not a factor on whether she used technology in the classroom. She stated that if she had more or less students she would still use the same amount of technology in the classroom. She not only uses technology in the classroom, she also uses AOL Instant Messenger to communicate with students. AIM is a lot faster, she said, and if the question was quick it was better than writing an email. She used a lot of WebCT last semester but this semester she went back to handouts. The reason for her change was she felt that students learned more and were more likely to do the assignments if they had a physical copy instead of a virtual one. She also ran into problems last semester because the students would bring their laptops into class when they did activities on the readings and this was violating her policy of no computers. So to alleviate confusion she started to hand out papers. Her technology use this semester is more supplemental than last semester. She uses PowerPoint for graphical reinforcement of concepts she is going over. She also likes to illustrate how to use certain technologies on the projector instead of having to walk around to each student. When I asked her to describe her technical ability she said that it was "inadequate." She went on to explain that she felt she was technically illiterate and knew only how to use the basics of Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and WebCT. Kelly was a self taught technology user and did not receive any formal training in college on how to integrate technology into the classroom. Kelly was the only participant interviewed that indicated she sought training sessions to help further her technical literacy and technology integration.

Suzanne Smith is a veteran English professor that has taught for about 10 years. She has been a freelance writer for more than 20 years. She felt that her technology usage was fair because she has a basic knowledge of computers and uses them for research and communicating with students by email. The amount of students she has does not influence her

technology use. She uses overhead more, than PowerPoint and Excel for grading. I asked her if she ever had a bad experience with technology and she said she didn't. She went on to say she likes hard copies just because of the era she was from. She didn't like the prospect of working all night on a piece only to have it deleted because of a technology malfunction. She feels that technology changes our communication. She felt some assignments that should be given attention and time are rushed and vague. From the time when she first started to teach to now, Professor Smith has used technology to enhance and advance her curriculum. She utilizes, and teaches students how to utilize, the scholarly databases that are available online. Since there is now information at our fingertips that used to require extensive research, she is able to assign more complex and abstract assignments that enhance her curriculum. She said back when she was in school technology was not relied on like it is today. She taught herself how to use technology over the years because she was a freelance writer. Yet she did not receive schooling on how to integrate technology in the classroom either.

Marilyn Fischer teaches in the philosophy department and has been teaching for 30 years. She says that she uses more and more technology each year. She stays updated on new technologies at a rate that is appropriate with her usage and said back when she was in college technology was not used heavily. She defined her technical ability to be moderate. She uses email to communicate with her students, can do basic PowerPoint presentations, and she can navigate the library's databases to find research. Professor Fischer stated that she did not need as much technical skill as other fields and feels her technology usage is appropriate given the society we live in today.

### **Conclusion**

After interviewing both veteran and novice university professors it is apparent that teachers young and old were/are not prepared in college to integrate technology in the classroom. The novice teachers showed the most technology usage not because they were being

taught differently in college but because they grew up using technology. The veteran teachers had to teach themselves or attend training sessions to learn how to use technology. This is reflected in the types and amounts of technology they use. Veteran teachers use less technology because they don't like to attend training sessions to learn how to use newer more current ones. When Professor Smith stated that she used the overhead a lot instead of PowerPoint, that assumption was reinforced.

For students of today to utilize technology correctly, teachers, at all levels, must be trained on how to integrate those technologies their students should be using into their curriculum. My research has proven that teachers are not adequately trained in college and as a result must either attend supplemental sessions on how they can integrate technology into the classroom, teach themselves how to integrate technology into the classroom through trial and error like Professor Whitney, or a combination of both.

Technology changes every year and because of that it is reasonable to ask a professor to attend one or two training sessions just to stay current and build off of their previous technical knowledge. But from what I have found, new professors didn't get any training in college on how to integrate technology into their curriculum and as a result, these training sessions serve a different purpose: to teach professors how to use available technologies and how to integrate them into their curriculum and classroom. This causes professors to resent and turn away from using technology.

In general my findings show that a lack of curriculum technology integration occurs across the board, from kindergarten to college. The findings of this study also support the claim that novice professor's technical literacies are not adequate and they are not prepared, in college, on correct methods of technology integration. They use very little technology initially and must teach themselves or attend dreaded workshops to learn.

### Works Cited

- Akmal, Tariq, Merrill M. Oaks and Ronald Barker. "The Status of Technology Education: A National Report on the State of the Profession." The State of Technology Education: A National Report (2002): 6-25.
- Balajthy, Ernest. "Technology and Current Reading/Literacy Assessment Strategies." Reading Teacher 61.3 (2007): 240-7.
- Lawless, Kimberly A. and James W. Pellegrino. "Professional Development in Integrating Technology Into Teaching and Learning: Knowns, Unknowns, and Ways to Pursue Better Questions and Answers." Review of Educational Research (2007): 575-614.
- Lei, Jing and Yong Zhao. "Technology uses and student achievement: A longitudinal study." Computers & Education (2007): 284-296.
- Markauskaite, Lina. "Exploring the Structure of Trainee Teachers' ICT Literacy: The Main Components of, and Relationships Between, General Cognitive and Technical Capabilities." Educational Technology Research & Development 55.6 (2007): 547-72.
- Matzen, Nita J., and Julie A. Edmunds. "Technology as a Catalyst for Change: The Role of Professional Development." Journal of Research on Technology in Education 39.4 (2007): 417-30.

### Appendix A: Survey

1. Do you use technology (power point, web ct, email website) in your curriculum?

Yes            No

2. Is your technology use: (Define below)

Heavy            Medium    Light

Heavy-Use of email, blog, website, e-portfolios

Medium-Use of Power Point during class most of the time, email,

webct.

Light-Rare PowerPoint, email

3. What subject do you teach?

---

4. How many students do you teach?

5. What are your office hours?

6. If you had to use one word to describe your technical ability what would it be?

---

### Appendix B: General Interview Template

(1) Follow up to question 4 with whether that influences their tech. use.

(2) Do you feel technology makes your life easier or harder?

If Harder ask why. If easier and they don't use it ask why. (explain)

(3) Explain your word in question 6.

(4) Do you think technology does help you teach?

If yes and they don't use why don't they?

If no, then what do they use and why doesn't it help.

(5) Did the person have a bad experience with technology and did that affect their tech. usage.

(6) If the person is older or has taught for an extended period of time (+5yrs) how have they changed their technology use to adapt to modernization.

(a) If you don't use tech. Why not?

(7) Do you feel your technology use is appropriate given the society we live in? Explain.