

# Best Practices in Educational Technology Implementation in 2-Year Community College Writing Centers

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## Research Problem

Currently, there are few studies addressing best practices in college tutoring centers, even fewer addressing best practices in college writing centers, and none that address writing center administrator's perceptions of best practices, especially in the area of technology.

Current best practices in college writing centers neglect to discuss the educational technology in use, focusing more on the training of tutors and pen and paper approaches.

Saxon, Martirosyan, and Vick (2016) found that “no literature could be located that described the effective use of technology specifically in support of IRW (Integrated Reading and Writing) instruction” (p. 34).

## Purpose of the Study

This study will take a qualitative look at what current two-year college writing center administrators report as effective in integrating educational technology into their centers.

These effective elements will be used to create the start of the conversation in regards to creating a baseline of best practices of technology implementation in college-level writing centers.

Because of the vast differences in student populations and budgets at writing centers, this will be a qualitative look and what writing center administrators view as what works best for them, with their own populations and budgeting, along with what they find beneficial, what they find does not work as well as it should, and what they would like to see offered in future technologies.

## Research Questions

Q1: What do Writing Center Administrators perceive as being the best practices in terms of educational technology implementation into their writing centers?

Q2: How have Writing Center Administrators seen technology as being beneficial to their students at their writing centers, if at all?

Q3: What kinds of future educational technology functionalities would Writing Center Administrators view as the most important for writing center assistance?

## Literature Review

“The best practice of using current technology to connect teachers and students is one of the biggest advancements in educating 21st century teachers and students” (Icard, 2014, p. 41).

“Technology educators utilize best practices to help mold students into active and engaged learners who are skilled at critical thinking and problem solving and capable of transferring classroom concepts and knowledge to other experiences” (Hart, Ernst, Clark, DeLuca, and Kelly, 2017, p. 32).

While there have been studies that look at best practices in educational technology and studies of best practices in writing center administration, the research on best practices of educational technology implementation in college writing centers, specifically 2-year college writing centers, is non-existent.

## Literature Review, cont.

“Research has shown that the use of computers, educational technology, and assistive technology can improve students’ writing performance” (Wilson, 2017, p. 692).

“Technology is now inextricably linked to literacy and literacy education” (Griffin and Minter, 2013, p. 141).

“Computer technology should be available in the writing center and should support the work of the center” (Pennington and Gardner, 2006, p. 261).

“Many writing centers in two-year colleges, rather than being tied to specific areas of the curriculum, serve writers at all levels and in any area of the curriculum across the entire institution. In addition to serving students, many writing centers also serve faculty and the community” (Pennington and Gardner, 2006, p. 261).



## Literature Review, cont.

Crawford (2016) states that there is a need for writing centers to create an identity for themselves and one way of doing this is to create a set of “best practices” when it comes to the use of educational technology in the center and how it is implemented.

Herold (2016) points out that there is a great deal of free software and applications that can assist students in creating new and original ways of producing content to showcase what they have learned, from iMovie and Google Docs, to Audacity and Skype. These software and apps can turn a smartphone into an almost professional-level video laboratory.

“Formal evaluation is not required and may never be conducted on software prior to its release, leaving parents and educators to determine whether the stated goals or claims are substantiated or how these claims are realized through the software” (Wood et al., 2017, p. 208).

# Methodology

## Qualitative Study using Grounded Theory

1. IRB will be filed at NJCU and approval will be obtained
2. List of potential participants will be created by studying members of the NJTAG (New Jersey Tutoring Administrators Group), ACTP (Association for the Coaching and Tutoring Profession), The CRLA (College Reading & Learning Association) PA/NJ Chapter, the NCLCA (National College Learning Center Association), and the NTA (National Tutor Association)
3. Participants will be contacted through email with information about the research, including informed consent
4. Willing participants will be sent a link to the survey in Qualtrics
5. Interviews will be scheduled and conducted
6. Data will be collected, coded, and analyzed
7. Findings from the analyzation from the data will be produced



## Methodology, cont.

To begin, 40 writing center administrators will be contacted about their willingness to participate in this study.

The study is being conducted in two parts: the first is a six-question survey that is being administered through Qualtrics. The second part is an interview with each administrator. The interview will take place either over the phone, through Skype, or through email communication, depending on the preference and availability of the interviewee.

All interviews will be recorded and professionally transcribed.

For comparison, Franklin (2014) used a very similar procedure in his study of program evaluation at community college learning assistance centers.

## Validity of Tools and Interview Questions

Questions will have been assessed by five experts in the field of two- and four-year college learning centers. These experts all have experience as writing center/learning center administrators and all are either members of the Two Year College Association, or are board members/officers of at least one of the following professional associations: Association for the Coaching and Tutoring Profession (ACTP), College Reading & Learning Association (CRLA), National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA), or the National Tutor Association (NTA).

None of these experts are associated with one of 10 writing centers that are being used for this research study.

The survey and interview questions will be provided to the five experts and their suggestions and opinions will be taken into account for updating all questions before they are administered to survey/interview participants.

## Data Collection

The survey will be conducted by emailing a link to all participants that leads to the survey questions, located in Qualtrics.

Interview question answers, depending upon whether the participant is available for a video-interview or a tele-interview, will be recorded using a standard audio- or video-recording software, which will be transcribed and uploaded to Atlas.ti.

For participants who cannot interview through telephone or video, a copy of the questions will be emailed to them for them to answer either through email, a Qualtrics link, or via a Google Form.

## Data Analysis

The collected qualitative data for all three research questions will be entered into Atlas.ti. All data from both the surveys and the interviews will be coded as Atlas.ti works with all major text formats, audio, and video formats, and therefore can be easily inputted into the software (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2020). Utilizing this software, themes and patterns can be located and connected between all the entered data.

Data from the interview questions will focus more on specific technologies that are being utilized along with what each administrator views as “best practices” for this field. By connecting patterns and themes in the interview portion of data collection will allow for a first view into the best practices for educational technology implementation in 2-year community college writing centers, thus filling in a glaring gap in the literature for writing centers, college tutoring, and educational technology implementation.

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