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Using Technology to Support Effective Writing Instruction in the ELA Classroom

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literature. Users can ask questions, get answers, and engage in debate in the comments section provided for each video, offering an excellent way to show students the kind of engagement we want with texts and how that engagement can be something relevant far beyond the classroom. The Green brothers have created other places where students can find examples of active, social engagement with texts. Their **Vlog-brothers** channel often features conversations about John Green's own novels, and **Pemberley Digital**, a fictitious company, produces "documentaries" that are actually modern YouTube adaptations of classic works.

YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com>)

With Nerdfightaria as a model, it is easy to see how YouTube can be used as more than an example of how authentic learning communities interact with text; it can also serve as a tool to foster this same type of community in our own classrooms. Students can use YouTube to retell classic stories from various perspectives, creatively

transforming the work into something new. Or students can use this format to tell their own stories, scripting out and planning a vlog or other YouTube format. We can take social engagement and interaction a step further when students interact with each other's videos or see outsiders interact and react to their videos. Their schoolwork is no longer something shared only with the teacher; it is now something they publish and share with the world.

Edmodo (<https://www.edmodo.com>)

What if teachers and students are not comfortable sharing their work with the world? There are different sites with various levels of privacy in which we can have our students interact. There are many blogging sites where students can respond to one another; Edmodo is one that is safe for creating an isolated learning community with whatever content one has in mind (video, text, links, images). The simplest way to describe Edmodo is "Facebook for school." This site allows teachers to create a class page that students

can join using a code. Students have individual profiles but cannot interact except within the class page. This creates a safe environment for students to have discussions about a text or even each other's work.

Using Technology to Support Effective Writing Instruction in the ELA Classroom

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Technology has become an integral part of community and personal literacies (Kist, 2009; Leu & Kinzer, 2000), but the use of technology during writing instruction is still limited and infrequent (Applebee & Langer, 2011; Harris, 2011). Integrating digital tools into the ELA classroom has the potential to support effective writing instruction by bridging the gap between home and school writing practices, influencing the development of ideas, and providing authentic purposes and audiences. The affordances provided by digital tools can influence both *what* and *why* students write. The apps described below could be used at various stages of the writing process during guided, shared, and independent writing with all students:

Evernote (<https://www.evernote.com>)

Evernote is a collaborative digital workspace where users can compile notes, ideas, images, and tasks. By using several Evernote apps together, students can research, plan, and organize their ideas all in one place. They can use **Clipper** to clip and save resources from the Web, **Skitch** to mark up images and PDFs, and **Penultimate** to draw or write with a stylus. Resources can be organized into notebooks by class and topic, making them easy to locate. I love using Evernote for everything because students can easily access their notes and find the same website they were using yesterday without searching their backpacks, lockers, and desks. It is a huge time (and paper!) saver. This is a free app for the iPhone, iPad, Android, and Web.

iBrainstorm (<http://www.ibrainstormapp.com>)

This is a digital corkboard where users compile free-hand drawings and typed notes. iBrainstorm is a great tool for planning and organizing. Users can type individual sticky notes, change the colors of those notes, and rearrange them to organize and group their ideas. Collaborators in a local setting can share their ideas by "flicking" notes to one another. This app is

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an easy way to do the same thing I've been doing with sticky notes on chart paper for years. Students can brainstorm first and organize second. Only now, they can continue to work on their plans and collaborate outside of class, and there is no fear of lost stickies! This is a free app available for the iPhone and iPad.

Popplet (<http://www.popplet.com>)

Popplet is a platform for ideas where users can compile pictures and typed notes and connect them with lines to create charts or webs. Popplet is a great tool for organizing ideas into planning webs. Students can collaborate in "real time" when working from their own devices in any location. Finished popplets can be exported as PDFs or JPGs. I like using Popplet with my struggling writers because they can search for pictures on the Internet and make a plan before having to think about the language they need to use. This app costs \$4.99 and is available for the iPhone, iPad, and Web.

A+ Writing Prompts (<http://appcrawlr.com/ios/a-writing-prompts>)

This is a writing prompt generator that provides an endless supply of inspiration. This app includes five prompt generators: scenes, sketches, texts, words, and news. Scenes include a place, character, object, and smell to inspire a creative narrative. Text prompts include phrases, quotes, story starters, and more. News includes a headline and news source. There are billions of unique prompt possibilities. Students can no longer say, "I don't know what to write about." Writer's block happens, but after flipping through a few ideas, students find an idea that gets their creativity flowing. I like this app because it gives them ideas while still providing them with choice. This app costs \$4.99 and is available for the iPhone, iPad, Android, and Kindle.

Strip Designer (http://www.vividapps.com/Strip_Designer/index.html)

Strip Designer is a comic strip creator that allows users to tell a story with their own photographs. It is a unique and motivating way for students to publish a story. They can include dialogue with text balloons and add captions, drawings, and effect symbols/stickers. Finished strips can be exported as PDFs or JPGs or shared on a variety of social media sites. Students

can even create graphic novels by combining strip pages. My favorite thing about this app is that it motivates students who thought they didn't like to write. Suddenly their protests about writing stop, and they are bringing in comic strips about things they did on the weekend. They often don't even realize they are writing until I tell them! This app costs \$2.99 and is available for the iPhone and iPad.

Shutterfly Photo Story (<http://www.shutterfly.com/photostoryclassroom>)

This app is a digital and print book creator that authors can use to tell the story behind photographs. With Photo Story, young authors choose from a variety of layouts, import pictures, add doodles and text, and even record audio messages on each page. The finished product can be shared with the audience via email. After reading the full-screen digital version, audience members have the option to purchase a print book with prices starting at \$19.99. Shutterfly even has a database

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of CCSS aligned lesson plans for creating books of all genres with students in grades K-8. This app is so easy to use to share work with an audience. Students will be proud of the professional appearance of their work. This is a free app available for the iPhone and iPad.

Book Creator (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/book-creator-for-ipad/id442378070?mt=8>)

This app is a book creator that gives authors the option to share their books in a variety of digital and print formats. Like most e-book apps, Book Creator allows the user the opportunity to create personalized books using photographs, free-hand drawing/writing, and words. What makes this app unique is its ability to include not only music and recorded speech but also video clips on every page. When authors are finished with their books, they can publish them to iBooks or export them as movies or PDFs. As a deaf educator, I am always looking for apps that are accessible for students who are deaf and hard of hearing. This app is not only fully accessible, the video feature also makes it perfect for students who use American Sign Language to communicate. This feature affords

my students the unique opportunity to publish their writing in both English and ASL side-by-side. This helps bridge the two languages, expand their audience, and personalize their writing. This is a free app available for the iPad.

HaikuDeck (<https://www.haikudeck.com>)

HaikuDeck is presentation software that lets authors share their ideas in a simple and creative way. HaikuDeck is a quick and fun way to make a slideshow. Users can search millions of Creative Commons photographs using keywords. If students are stumped, the app provides a word bank for image searches. Taking or importing original photos is also an option. Changing the theme or layout and adding text is easy. This app is a great way for students to publish poetry. Simple. Easy. Fun. And the finished product always looks great. It helps students who tend to be overwhelmed by a blank screen by providing them with options that make the task much less daunting. This is a free app for the iPhone, iPad, and Web.

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