# Gaming Learning Transfer from Social Media to Student Writing

My name is Doctor Adrienne Lamberti, and I'd like to talk about "Gaming Learning Transfer from Social Media to Student Writing.”

Many educators during the early 2000s noted their students’ growing interest in gaming and explored its implications for writing curricula. Crucial to successful gaming was a keen rhetorical awareness. Gamers especially needed to recognize online forums’ audiences to compose appropriate and productive posts.

Somehow, though, student gamers’ capacity for rhetorical analysis seemed to be left at the door when they entered the writing classroom (Lamberti & Richards, 2012). Scholars such as Hawisher and Selfe (2007) and Gee and Levine (2009) saw digitally cultivated knowledge as somehow distinct from that learned in formal educational settings, and so they encouraged teachers to import this knowledge into curricula.

Now, any student who possesses a phone and a Wi-Fi connection likely also holds the same rhetorical savvy as their gaming predecessors. Composing a social media post requires nuanced audience analysis in order to accrue a satisfying number of likes, shares, and upvotes, as well as the preferred type of comments (Lindsay, 2022). Our students regularly, if perhaps subconsciously, call upon rhetorical knowledge so that their social content (e.g., hashtags, behavioral retargeting, autofills) successfully uses algorithms. Put simply, they know how to game a system. Although a greater number of students now has experience with digital composing, the rhetorical acumen a student uses when, say, selecting filters for a TikTok, continues to be absent during school writing.

In a post-/pandemic context characterized by dwindling student engagement, writing center tutors might consider using students’ enthusiasm for social media as a gateway to lessons on other forms of writing. Making students’ knowledge explicit during writing center sessions can increase the “stickiness” of a tutoring session by honoring student experience. Gaming structures, when used to shape tutoring pedagogies, acknowledge evolving digital literacies (p. 10) such as students’ increased fluency with social media.

Tutors have an opportunity to facilitate learning through crafted prompts designed to elicit student participation during problem solving (as opposed to the student merely deferring to the tutor’s authority). As a result, tutor and student co-create specialized knowledge that the latter retains after a writing center session (Rose & Grauman, 2020).

There are methods as to how writing center tutors might utilize students’ social media expertise during tutoring sessions. In particular, sessions that invoke a sense of improvisation or playfulness (Ryan & Vie, 2022) enable students to experimentally engage with a lesson without feeling the pressures often found in a larger writing class (e.g., grades). The shorter time length and one-on-one tutor/student relationship that characterize many writing center sessions especially lend themselves to sessions structured to resemble games.

Here is one example of how writing center session as a game might, for lack of a better phrase, play out. This session is inspired by the social media app BeReal, which requires users to take impromptu photos and write captions. The app gives users only a limited amount of time to do so, thus increasing the chance that the user’s post will be authentic and unfiltered. A writing center session could ask the student to bring a writing assignment to the session, take a picture and write a post that capture the student’s understanding of the assignment in that moment. The duration of the session could focus on discussing the student's interpretation of the assignment. The impromptu nature of the student’s BeReal post can capture what aspects of the assignment the student does and does not understand. After the writing center tutor and student analyze the post, the student can again take a picture and write a caption that captures their changed understanding of the assignment.

The take-away here? Just as with a social platform’s algorithm that adjusts according to user behavior, writing center sessions-as-games can scaffold a student to higher-level writing concepts as the student masters each level (p. 55).

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