Digital Tools for Academic Writing: Enhancing Community, Collaboration, and Communication

Abstract: This paper discusses the need for educators to incorporate digital tools in the academic writing process. Using digital tools allows educators to support community, collaboration, and communication. This paper presents two teaching cases examining the influence of digital tools in the academic writing process. The first teaching case looks at a group of graduate students engaged in a collaborative writing assignment and the ways they harnessed digital tools to recommend a change in educational technology policy. The second teaching case looks at a group of doctoral students who formed a writing group in order to reduce isolation during the dissertation writing process. Ultimately these cases demonstrate the need for digital tools to support collaborative academic writing in efficient, effective, and meaningful ways.

Case 1: Pre-service Education
- Pre-service teachers engage in a multi-step, collaborative digital writing process
- Process supports professional growth and collaborative skills
- Helps to understand value of digital tools in supporting learning
- Acts as a model for classroom practice

Case 2: Dissertation Writing Group
- Bridge knowledge and skills as educators with the reciprocal demands of being students
- Scaffolded our own collaboration and community-based experiences as doctoral students
- Improved our academic writing skills
- Leveraged digital tools to support writing and collaboration as models for students

Implications
- Process of collaborative writing allows educators to learn, share ideas, build common understandings, and expand their practice
- Digital tools can support writing at all levels of education
- Digital tools can help educators overcome common barriers to participation in the education community

Question
How, if at all, are digital tools currently used at your institution to promote community, collaboration, and communication during the academic writing process? What targeted efforts to refine academic writing, such as those highlighted in these cases, could be strengthened at your institution?
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