

How Can We Better Support Teaching Multimodal Composition? A National Survey of Institutional Professional Development Efforts

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ABSTRACT

With the “multimodal turn” in the field of rhetoric and composition and the updated CWPA Outcomes Statement, writing studies scholars and teachers have come to define writing more broadly than as traditional alphabetic texts. But at the local institutional level, how have we been supporting writing instructors on teaching multimodality? In 2005, a group of scholars (Anderson et al.) sought to survey how multimodality was integrated into the writing curricula across the country. More than ten years later, I built off of that survey to give a snapshot of the current state of the field of institutional professional development efforts across the nation. I offer updated results to illustrate that there are still disparate beliefs on how big a role multimodality should play in writing classes, and that instructors do not receive adequate and/or effective formal professional training on teaching multimodality. Based on these results, I offer a framework for writing program administrators to approach professional development initiatives that combine theories and practices and take advantage of social learning models and resource sharing, with a consideration of their implications on labor issues.

INTRODUCTION

Ever since scholars in The New London Group introduced the “multimodal turn” (Kress; Kress and van Leeuwen; Arola, Ball, and Sheppard), multimodal composition has attracted much scholarly attention in the field of rhetoric and composition, and specifically in its subfield, computers and composition (Selfe; Selfe and Hawisher; Arola, Sheppard, and Ball). Many writing studies scholars have argued for the importance of expanding the understanding of what “writing” is beyond the traditional alphabetic text (Takayoshi and Selfe; Shipka; Wysocki, Johnson-Eilola, Selfe, and Sirc; Yancey). The need to include this dimension of writing was reflected in the revision of the Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition in 2014 by the CWPA:

In this Statement “composing” refers broadly to complex writing processes that are increasingly reliant on the use of digital technologies. Writers also attend to elements of design, incorporating images and graphical elements into texts intended for screens as well as printed pages. Writers’ composing activities have always been shaped by the technologies available to them, and digital technologies are changing writers’ relationships to their texts and audiences in evolving ways.

Writing pedagogy that addresses this extended definition of composing is driven by the need to prepare students for the kinds of communication that they have been and will be exposed to and practice in their personal, academic, professional, and civic life (Clark; Yancey). These arguments call for revisions of our writing curricula and pedagogical practices in response to “new models of writing” that have emerged in the twenty-first century and “to help our students compose often, compose well, and through these composings, become the citizen writers of our country, the citizen writers of our world, and the writers of our future” (Yancey 1).

Consequently, numerous professional development (PD) efforts have been undertaken at different levels to provide support and training to writing teachers on teaching multimodal composition and teaching writing with technology. As shown in the 2015 special issue of *Computers and Composition Online*, the impact of CIWIC (Computers in Writing-Intensive Classrooms, a two-week workshop run by Cindy Selfe at Michigan Tech University) and now DMAC (Digital Media and Composition, now a week-long workshop at The Ohio State University) has been significant on their participants and like ripples in a pond, to their students and colleagues at their own institutions. Such professional development efforts are groundbreaking in the field and continue to benefit many writing teachers and programs. However, material conditions often constrain diverse faculty participation. For example, many first-year writing courses are taught by contingent faculty who may not have the financial means to attend such costly workshops. Ultimately, these national-level professional development efforts represent a limited scope that can have difficulty reaching a broad audience.

In 2005, Dan Anderson, Anthony Atkins, Cheryl Ball, Krista Homicz Millar, Cynthia Selfe and Richard Selfe sought to investigate how multimodal composition was integrated into composition curricula by using a national survey in order to provide a “state-of-the-field” kind of snapshot. One of the sections in the survey focused on professional development efforts, aiming to discover “how teachers were preparing themselves to design and assess these assignments, how they were motivated and recognized for such work within institutional contexts” (Anderson et al. 60).

They found that instructors lacked “comprehensive, cohesive or effective” professional development support at their institutions and that often the support offered emphasized more learning how to use technologies rather than critical engagement and reflections with pedagogical practices such as assignment design and assessment when teaching multimodality (79). In 2015, a decade later, when reflecting on their experiences at CIWIC and DMAC, Rick Hunter, Alanna Frost, Moe Folk, and Les Loncharich still pointed out that local institutional professional development support often showed what Dickie Selfe refers to as an “inoculation approach” (cited in Hunter, Frost, Folk, and Loncharich).

More than ten years have passed since Anderson et al.’s comprehensive survey was conducted. The landscape of digital technologies has drastically changed, but the need for teaching multimodal composition has remained if not increased. Do the widespread use of digital technologies and the long scholarly legacy of multimodal composition mean that writing teachers are less resistant to teaching multimodality and that they need less support in doing so because they are more technologically savvy? What kinds of professional development efforts are now in place to support the teaching of multimodality? With this curiosity in mind, I built on Anderson et al.’s survey, especially the sections on definition of multimodality, teaching resources, pedagogical and technological training, and the assessment of technology training in order to investigate the research questions below:

- How have the attitudes toward teaching multimodality in writing programs changed since 2005 across the nation?
- How have writing instructors developed experiences and skills in teaching multimodality? What resources do they use to enhance their multimodality pedagogy? (In particular, I’m interested to see if instructors still rely more on their peers and self-teaching as concluded in the old survey.)
- What are the professional development opportunities offered by their programs, departments, and institutions?
- How is the labor of professional development in this area recognized by programs, departments, and institutions?

I hope the answers to these questions can provide us a glimpse of the current state of the field and prompt us to think of meaningful ways to develop sustainable professional development efforts in teaching multimodality that consider the material constraints and labor conditions of composition teachers.

SURVEY DESIGN AND DISTRIBUTION

In an elaborate rationale, Anderson et al. argue for using a survey as “an act of definition” to “define multimodal compositions and their place within Composition Studies and English departments” (63). My survey is designed with a similar justification: to define attitudes toward teaching multimodality and PD efforts to support such teaching at the institutional level. I used a convenience sampling method through an open call that solicited participants on the WPA-L listserv as well as a call to writing program directors at institutions who participated in the 2005 survey, including both first-year writing and advanced writing programs. Seventy-nine participants started the survey, and forty-four completed the survey. The choice of convenience sampling was made for two reasons: (a) soliciting with an open call without identifying individual participants allowed the researcher to reach participants who might not be teaching in a program engaged in teaching multimodality, therefore leading to a more accurate state of multimodality teaching in writing curricula, and (b) reaching out to institutions that had participated in the 2005 survey can potentially present comparable results between the two surveys. As a result, respondents to the survey represent a diverse sample, coming from a variety of institutions, ranging from four-year research universities to liberal arts colleges to technical colleges.

My survey questions include four sections: multimodality in the writing program; teaching resources; training and professional development; individual and program demographics. In order to address the first research question, I want to gain a basic understanding of how multimodality is implemented in writing programs by asking questions about how it is defined at different programmatic levels and how individual instructors prioritize teaching multimodality in relation to any programmatic mandates or attitudes. In the second section, I sought to understand what kinds of teaching materials instructors use, such as textbooks, and where they obtain these resources as well as how they evaluate and what their needs are for current instructional materials. The third section is the main focus of the survey, asking questions about what kinds of training or PD support instructors receive and where they received it, as well as how their participation in such PD efforts is recognized and compensated. The last section provides an overview of the demographics of respondents and their programs.

It is important to note that while the old survey adopted a definition of multimodal composition performed with mostly digital tools and professional training on using technologies, the current survey extends the meaning of multimodal composition to include composing in modes that are not necessarily digital. Jody Shipka, in *Toward a Composition Made Whole*,

cautions us that the emphasis on “new” technologies can lead to the tendency to equate multimodal composition with composing computer-based digitized, screen-mediated texts (8). She thus argues for the importance of broadening the meaning of “technology” to include, for example, three-dimensional objects. Therefore, my survey questions adopt a broad understanding of multimodality, and instead of just asking about how teachers are trained to use technologies (hardware and software), I ask about the training of teaching multimodal composition in general. Further, I aim to discover how PD efforts address both theoretical issues about multimodal pedagogy and practical teaching applications.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Demographic and Institutional Context of Survey Respondents

My survey respondents reflect an evenly distributed range of academic positions, from graduate students, to tenure-track professors, to two-year college instructors, full-time lecturers, and part-time lecturers, as well as academic specialists; no one category has more than 9 responses out of a total of 43 participants who answered that question. Compared with the 2005 survey, there are also more respondents who are teaching at a four-year institution with no graduate program in their department (n=11 instead of n=2). Thus, my survey results may reflect more accurately the state of professional training on teaching multimodal literacies at the undergraduate level. Respondents also show all levels of experiences in teaching multimodal composition—from never having taught it to having taught it for more than sixteen years—while the 2005 survey did not have any respondents who had never taught or taught multimodal composition for a year or less.

With this demographic information in mind, in the following sections, I will summarize and analyze the significant findings from the survey in response to my research questions as well as in comparison with the 2005 survey.

Teaching Multimodal Composition as an Individual Endeavor

One significant change in the survey results compared to 2005 is that the attitudes toward the integration of teaching multimodality into writing curricula have changed. It is clear that more people are holding teaching multimodal composition at a higher priority in their writing classes. When asked about what priority teaching multimodality holds for them, many fewer people put teaching multimodality as low or no priority than ten years ago. The old survey shows that 83% (n=34) of the respondents held it as low priority and 27% (n=11) as no priority whereas the new data show

8% (n=4) and 4% (n=2) respectively. At the same time, more than 90% of respondents (n=45) indicate that they would participate in teaching multimodal literacies, albeit in different ways.

Similarly, how multimodality is defined in writing programs has also changed. In the current survey, fewer respondents say that multimodality is defined as texts that are designed with attention to several/many modes of communication (29%, n=15) while more choose to define it as texts that are designed using a combination of words, images, animations, video, audio, physical objects, etc. (46%, n=24). Such responses may indicate that writing teachers now treat teaching multimodal composition both as an analytical and a productive endeavor. More teachers now may be paying attention to the different production elements that students ought to be engaged with in multimodal projects.

While the general attitude toward teaching multimodality seems to be more enthusiastic now, how it is taught specifically in classrooms is not always consistent and is very much up to individual writing instructors. When asked at what level the implementation of multimodal literacies happens, many still responded that it happens on an individual teacher basis (81%, n=42) and on a course basis (33%, n=17), reflecting similar results from the 2005 survey. However, respondents' perceptions of multimodal composition in writing classrooms do reflect an in-depth, rhetorical awareness of their pedagogical practices. It is also important to note that when cross tabulated with the demographic data, these various beliefs on how multimodality should be integrated into writing curricula are reflected across different kinds of institutions and programs where respondents work, whether four-year institutions or community colleges.

When asked to elaborate what role non-textual composition should play in the writing classroom (Q16), a variety of answers emerged that fall under these following categories:

- It should be integral in the writing class because it prepares students to write different genres in different kinds of contexts in the future. A typical response is: "Significant! It's important that students critically, rhetorically, and ethically understand and communicate through/ in multiple modes. It's also important that they learn to engage in meaning making processes by layering multiple modes."
- It should be integral in the writing class and it does not displace conventional alphabetic writing, because it helps students to learn the same kinds of rhetorical concepts and practice process work. A typical response is: "I think the majority of creation in the writing classroom should be multimodal. This doesn't displace writing itself, or

any of the more traditional goals of the writing classroom. Those skills are used in invention, documentation, and process work. But these conventions also must be ‘translated’ for multimodality, as the majority of writing that takes place in the workplace and in academia, I would argue, is multimodal (oral, digital, and written).”

- It should play some role, but it depends on the discipline and the purpose of the course, or as long as it fulfills the program’s/course’s learning outcomes and objectives. Some sample responses:
 - “I believe every student should have classroom experience with multimodal composition, but I do not think every course should be required to cover it. Basic writing skills must not be neglected, but neither should multimodal writing.”
 - “A minor role in composition generally. In Writing in the Discipline courses, students should learn the discipline–specific use of graphical information.”
 - “I think this depends widely on the discipline. In a composition class that serves all majors, I think more alphabetical text serves the largest number of students whose employers will likely judge them based on alphabetical texts and expect them to have mastered alphabetical texts before acquiring digital/multimodal authoring techniques.”

Unfortunately, not all responses reflect an optimistic prospect for the development of multimodal curricula. A few respondents still see non-textual based, non-alphabetic writing as the main focus of their writing classes, where other modes of writing should either play a supplementing role or no role at all. Without further investigation into their curricula, it is unclear how much this perception is constrained by programmatic structures or policies or other material constraints. Perhaps multimodality will always be implemented at varying levels across institutions given the differing local and institutional contexts. However, conflicting perceptions can exist within the same institutional context, as one respondent pointed out that some faculty in their department “insist on assigning print-based compositions only.” Such inconsistent perspective within one program or department can potentially create challenges for professional development efforts.

Often, instructors have a lot of freedom over what they can teach in their classes; without programmatic mandates on implementing multimodal composition, for example, individual instructors’ attitudes toward multimodality can result in very different student learning experiences. At the same time, without programmatic structures, teaching materials

on multimodality can also vary significantly, often leaving the responsibility of finding and developing instructional materials solely on individual instructors.

Compiling and Selecting Teaching Resources and Materials

If implementation of multimodality varies from classroom to classroom, the choices of teaching materials and textbooks also reflect similarly a level of individual freedom in teaching multimodality. Specifically, I asked a new question on who selects the textbook they use. While 36% (n=17) responded that they choose their own texts, 38% (n=18) indicated that the WPA or the writing program council selects the books. Only in two cases was a book voted on by all the instructors in the program. Even though new textbooks on teaching multimodality have been published since the old survey was administered, such as *Writer/Designer: A Guide to Making Multimodal Projects* and *Understanding Rhetoric*, many respondents (47%, n=16) still don't rely on textbooks to teach multimodality, visual rhetoric, or new media. Others also mention using parts of general composition textbooks such as *Everything's an Argument*, *Bedford/St. Martin's Guide to Writing*, *The Bedford Book of Genres*, and *The Academic Writer*, which, while not focused exclusively on multimodality, have some sections on multimodal composition. Among the use of textbooks, *Writer/Designer* is the most popular. In comparison, before this book was published, respondents in the 2005 survey often cobbled together more texts to teach multimodality. As a field, we may deduce that new textbooks on multimodal composition have provided useful resources that were long needed. Nonetheless, the more that teaching materials offer, the more writing instructors may be craving more resources and support for teaching multimodality.

Similarly, respondents expressed desires for textbook materials to cover more content that includes both analytical and production-oriented materials, such as:

- Media artifacts for study (e.g., images, audio, and video)
- Analytical exercises (e.g., texts with prompts for guided readings)
- Writing activities (e.g., response fields for freewriting or notetaking)
- Skills instruction (e.g., tutorials for using applications)
- Activities instruction (e.g., tutorials for conducting research, collaborating, or composing)

Many more respondents in the current survey also chose to offer other suggestions not listed in the options. These include a range of topics such as rhetorical strategies, design principles, cultural/social connections of

technologies, and prompts and samples of productions. While most respondents in the 2005 survey said that instructional materials were missing content on rhetoric involving animations and motions (77%, n=30), most of my survey respondents point out the lack of coverage of cultural dimensions of new media (76%, n=29). These results may not be surprising given the development of digital technologies over the past decade and the field of computers and composition, which reflect a disciplinary trend toward more emphasis on critical and rhetorical literacies in researching and teaching about composing with new media that attune to the social and cultural perspectives on media consumption and production.

Efforts on Training and Professional Development

Not only do individual instructors take on the responsibilities of selecting and compiling materials for teaching multimodality, they also rely heavily on their own professional and social networks to support their pedagogical endeavors, more so than structured and/or required institutional and programmatic professional development training efforts. Compared to the 2005 survey, although there is an increasing percentage of participants who take advantage of the departmental and institutional workshops, the large majority of instructors still rely on self-training. In order to find out more whether instructors have received training on teaching multimodality and where they've received it, I added these questions in the new survey. Slightly more than half of the respondents who answered the question (57%, n=25) said that they have been trained to teach multimodality. When asked where they received such training, the majority said they received it from either graduate school education (67%) or informal mentoring by other instructors/faculty (37%). A third of respondents also indicated that they learned much through their own trainings or professional networks outside their institutions such as DMAC and the computers and writing community. Only 10% said they received it from program and institutional workshops.

In response to questions about professional development support for different areas, a large majority of instructors (around 90%) responded that they rely on self-training when it comes to learning and assessing new software and systems as well as planning and integrating multimodal assignments into their classes. However, compared with the 2005 survey, more people chose departmental and institutional workshops, and fewer people selected workshops offered at other institutions or other social networks such as listservs or colleagues at other institutions. This may be a positive sign, indicating that programs, departments, and institutions may value multimodal composition more by providing more professional development

opportunities to support writing teachers teaching multimodality. Nonetheless, when asked about how other teachers in their program/department receive support in these areas, we begin to see some problems with institutional professional development efforts or the lack thereof. The answers in the comment box here show more explicitly that many instructors still need to be more proactive and rely on self-training when it comes to getting help, as exemplified in these responses:

- “When it comes to my institution’s resources, training and workshop options, IT knowledge, individualized Helpdesk help, there is much to be desired.”
- “Some teachers are very engaged with departmental seminars. Others are more self-taught. Overall, though, I think people do it like me: by trying out recommendations from friends and colleagues.”
- “Faculty at my institution have to be proactive if they want to incorporate multimodal literacies. It is very much an individual instructor’s choice.”

In order to investigate programmatic and institutional structures for PD efforts, my survey focused on asking questions about any required workshops for training to teach multimodality. Most of the responses showed that such workshops are not really required and that attendance is low. However, it is gratifying to see that around 40% of respondents indicated that workshops on implementing multimodality in classrooms take various forms: tool-oriented: focused on learning the technology; presentation based: presenter sharing their own assignments; hands-on: making your own multimodal assignments; discussion-based: talking about challenges and issues related to teaching multimodality.

On the one hand, for all institutions who offer these workshops, the pedagogical/theoretical issues covered in this training include a wide range: theories and practices of multimodal literacies; assessment of multimodal assignments; student/user agency with technology; rhetorical analysis of technologies within classroom settings. On the other hand, the nature of learning in these workshops varies depending on the types of institutions (see Table 1). The majority of the responses indicate that these workshops, if required, are often offered once a semester. Even when these workshops were offered, very few respondents found them very effective (5%, n=2), just as very few people found the technology training to be very effective in the 2005 survey. Further, very few places offer assessment on teaching multimodality at the program level, and university level assessment of such PD efforts is rarely done. Suggestions on how to improve this training show

that there is still a high demand for more time/opportunities to experiment with teaching/learning in digital environments, including more time and opportunities to either gain more knowledge of technology or to integrate multimodality in the classroom.

Table 1

Cross-Tabulated Data of Program Information with the Nature of Learning in Required Multimodality Workshops.

		Four-year college/ university with a PhD program	Four-year college/ university with no graduate program	Community college
What is the nature of learning in the multimodal literacies implementation workshops?	Tool oriented: focused on learning the technology	9	2	4
	Presentation based: presenter sharing their own assignments	7	5	2
	Hands-on practice of making your own multimodal assignments	5	4	4
	Discussion-based: talking about challenges and issues related to teaching multimodality	9	4	3

It is interesting to see through cross tabulation the kinds of institutions that are more likely to offer these workshops, the content of these

workshops, and how well they are attended. While overall a majority of the institutions represented by respondents of the survey do not offer required workshops, four-year colleges or universities with a PhD program are more likely to offer them. When offered, these workshops are led by a variety of instructors, from graduate students to contract/adjunct faculty to tenured/tenure-track faculty and to university assigned instructors, and they are often offered in the English department or some kind of institutional-wide faculty technology support center. What's at stake here is also the issue of labor conditions and power dynamics among these different types of writing teachers. Given that most instructors teaching writing courses, especially in the Gen Ed curricula, are likely contingent faculty, it's unethical to simply require such participation in professional development activities when they are in precarious positions if such participation "is not at least indirectly rewarded or evaluated" (Lalicker and Lynch-Binieck 96).

I thus wanted to find out how such labor was being perceived at the institutional level: is this labor recognized, acknowledged, and/or rewarded? Most respondents said that instructors got no reward for teaching multimodality. However, the 2005 survey showed that there were some rewards offered at either the departmental level, or in the forms of pay or course release for learning and teaching with technologies. But teaching with technologies does not necessarily mean teaching multimodality; for example, in the old survey, some people indicated that teaching with technology meant teaching in a computer classroom, which does not necessarily mean that multimodal composition is taught. Finally, both surveys revealed that some of the rewards come from intrinsic satisfaction of seeing students succeed, some recognition in teaching awards, and a component to be included in annual review documents. One comment in my survey said that they were invited to provide further training at presemester orientation meetings, which they did not see as a reward. Certainly, these recognitions are important, but if participating in trainings to teaching multimodality also leads to giving such training but not pay or course release, then it simply requires more labor and effort from the instructor, which may be difficult or problematic.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this study, I set out to investigate the "state of the field" on multimodal composition in writing programs and professional development support writing instructors rely on for teaching multimodality, and how their labor is valued in that process. Even though this is a limited, convenience sample, the research results provide a snapshot of the current state of how the

teaching of multimodal composition is supported in a variety of writing programs and institutions. These findings present interesting implications for writing program administration work: how do we provide professional support for writing instructors on teaching multimodality, and how should we take advantage of already existing professional and social networks? They may also lead us to become more conscious about labor issues in our writing programs. Who should be performing the labor of professional development? How should we value the participation in these PD efforts? Before discussing the implications of this study for WPA work, I will first summarize the main findings:

- Multimodal composition plays an increasingly important role in our writing curricula across the nation. But the extent to which multimodality is implemented in writing classes is still very dependent on types of courses, programmatic and institutional contexts, as well as the preferences of individual instructors. Sometimes, within the same department or program, instructors may hold different opinions on the values of teaching multimodality.
- There still exists a spectrum of different perceptions on how multimodal writing should be defined, especially in relation to traditional print-based writing. While some instructors already assume the importance of multimodal composition and have moved beyond tool-oriented concerns to a more in-depth and critical understanding of the tools used, others still believe that multimodal writing is displacing important traditional writing practices.
- We now have more textbooks on teaching multimodal composition, but many instructors still compile their own teaching resources. There is also a need for texts that address more the cultural and social understanding of technologies (perhaps to support the students' development of critical literacies that Stuart Selber argued; see Pignetti and Inman) as well as new, emerging genres. Instructors often take on much individual responsibility and freedom on selecting their own teaching materials.
- Across institutions, we tend to provide inadequate and/or irregular and inconsistent formal professional development and training opportunities at both the programmatic level and the institutional level. Instructors are thus still largely more reliant on self-support to implement multimodal composition in their classes.
- Teaching multimodal composition and participating in professional development activities is sometimes recognized but hardly ever rewarded with pay or course releases.

These conclusions also align with the findings of *Inside Higher Education's* 2017 survey on faculty's attitudes on technology where online learning and use of digital technologies have been increasingly accepted by faculty, but not enough institutional professional support is provided for them. They still primarily rely on peer support with the use of these tools (Lederman and McKenzie).

These issues present challenges for WPAs and writing program administration in general. With the increasing presence and the importance of teaching multimodal literacies, instructors are often faced with the constraints of lack of teaching materials and professional support. At the same time, tensions within programs/department may exist due to different beliefs on such importance. For writing program administrators, how to better advocate for the values of multimodal composition and how to provide or support effective professional development efforts that take advantage of individual instructor experiences and expertise become important questions. The findings of my survey indicate that instructors are very much self-reliant in developing their pedagogies in multimodal literacies; they seek out the increasing number of teaching resources and materials as well as their professional and social networks for ideas and learning new technologies. So how can we take advantage of models of "self-training" and "learning from friends and colleagues informally" to foster the teaching of multimodality at the programmatic and institutional level?

CONCLUSION: TOWARD SOCIAL LEARNING MODELS OF PD

At the national level, PD efforts for teaching multimodality are exemplified by CWIC /DMAC initiatives, which have been taking advantage of social learning models to construct communities of practice that supported integrating technologies into the writing classrooms—"informed by composition and rhetorical theory, educational theory, and technological understandings"—for over thirty years (DeVoss, Ball, Selfe, and DeWitt). Many people who have attended CIWIC/DMAC have taken away valuable peer learning experiences that supported teaching in their respective institutions (see special issue 36 of *Computers and Composition* and *Computers and Composition Online*).

I argue that we can apply such social learning models and approaches at the local level as well, as already done by some participants of DMAC institutes (DeJoy; McGrath and Guglielmo; Alexander and Williams). Here, based on my survey findings, I theorize a framework with some specific suggestions for us to consider how these issues overlap in our professional development efforts:

- PD efforts must be framed as intellectual endeavors with a combination of theory and practice. They must start with the theoretical foundations: departmental/programmatic conversations about multimodal composition with formalized expectations such as programmatic learning outcomes: how it is defined, and how it should be implemented.
- PD efforts should tap into the resources and experiences of individual instructors, allowing everyone to contribute to a department/program-wide knowledge base such as resource repositories including teaching materials, scholarly resources, assessment tools, composing tools, etc.
- PD efforts must create sustained peer learning communities that facilitate dialogues among all instructors for “distributed invention” (Alexander and Williams) on pedagogical practices such as designing assignments, planning lessons, and dealing with classroom challenges when teaching multimodality.
- PD efforts must be consistently assessed to address institutional and programmatic as well as students’ needs in order to further improve PD activities on teaching multimodality.
- PD efforts should be properly recognized and compensated. WPAs should advocate for merit-based as well as material compensation such as pay or course release for those taking leadership positions in PD efforts, and also recognize the labor of participating and attending PD activities to improve their pedagogies. Programmatic policy languages should be created to clearly indicate methods of recognition and compensation, keeping in mind especially the precarious positions of contingent faculty.

At the programmatic level, we should inform and engage instructors in understanding both the theoretical and practical values of multimodal literacies, both broadly and in local contexts fitting particular programmatic and curricular goals. Just as many writing programs tend to adopt a selection of textbooks or even mandate instructional materials, crowdsourcing instructional materials on teaching multimodality may help provide better support for instructors. Increasingly, instructors are looking for materials that not only address the production of multimodal projects, but also address the critical and cultural dimensions of new media (as shown in the survey results). Searching in and across institutions and programs, crowdsourcing may be formalized and systematized at the programmatic level to be offered to instructors so that they do not have to rely so much on self-training and so that individual learning can have a social impact.

Willard-Traub argues that faculty development should be “an opportunity for reciprocal exchange, learning, and knowledge production” (434). Social and peer learning models can better enact such goals. Framing PD efforts as intellectual endeavors, WPAs may facilitate small peer learning groups among instructors that engage in activities of exchanging ideas and practices in teaching at different points of the semester. McGrath and Guglielmo emphasize the values of a community of practice model to professional development workshops in their own institution through “collaborative problem solving, peer learning, and information and strategy sharing during the workshop sessions and in the workshop space on the learning management system” (48). Alexander and Williams theorize the concept of “distributed invention” based on their experiences at DMAC to include “social, mutually appropriated, epistemic, negotiated, situated, proximal, responsive, interruptive, transformative, trust-based, and idiosyncratic” (38), which can be valuable to institutional professional development for writing instructors as well.

In this social process to support teaching, not only should instructors be in dialogue with one another, they must also relate their work to the needs of students. For example, University of Texas at El Paso’s curriculum redesign approach to FYC involves all instructors in the decision-making process throughout the semester and takes advantage of different levels of experiences and expertise to redesign the program, in this productive community (Brunk-Chavez). In a similar vein, the New Media Writing Studio at Texas Christian University also presents an administrative model that values collaborative learning, especially in supporting the teaching of multimodal composing where a community of tenure-track faculty, full-time faculty, and graduate students in English collaborate to provide consultation and support for faculty teaching new media writing across disciplines.

These examples illustrate that successful social learning communities among instructors require intentional, meaningful, and sustainable professional development efforts. The inconsistencies in my survey findings reflect that consistent, formalized PD efforts must also address a variety of issues related to multimodal composing and pedagogies, bringing together theory and practice. To ensure a democratic process and increase sustainability of such structures, these groups should be formed and framed with clearly laid out goals and purposes and may be assessed with informal check-in points to ensure their effectiveness. Certainly, assessment of multimodal composition and related PD efforts is a complicated and at times challenging process. The model of digital writing assessment that involves students to cultivate experimentation and risk (see Reilly and Atkins) can also be applied to assessment of PD initiatives. What counts as effective

PD support for teaching multimodality? The answer to this question may look different from institution to institution and instructor to instructor. It is all the more important that the logistics of carrying out such efforts should be planned and discussed with a program committee with input from instructors themselves, especially when many of the instructors may be contingent faculty.

Thus, as we explore the possibilities of social learning models I recommend here, we need to critically examine the power dynamics in our institutional contexts and strive to enact these models in PD work in truly dialogic ways as intended. As Lind and Mullin argue, “all academic workers [need to] reconsider the stakes that necessitate supportive collaboration, recognition, and rewards” (14). When we ask faculty to participate in professional development activities, we are also asking them to put in more labor in their work (see Rodrigo and Romberger’s work on the invisible service of “writing program technologists”). Many contingent faculty may also be very well prepared to lead PD efforts, but simply don’t due to various factors such as department cultures, institutional policies, or consequently poor working conditions that rob them of the energy or agency to do so. How can we acknowledge and reward those who lead and attend these PD workshops? How do we build a peer learning community that’s led by the peer instructors themselves? This may require the kind of resolution that Khan, Lalicker, and Lynch-Binieck call for to fight the exploitation of contingent faculty as well as a reframing of that rhetoric of exploitation into “a rhetoric of expectations and standards” that Babb and Wooten argue for, which emphasizes the importance of creating opportunities for contingent faculty “through collaborative involvement in programmatic decisions” (Babb and Wooten 170). Social learning models should be community based and continually evaluated based on the lived experiences of writing teachers in the local contexts.

Finally, I argue that we need to continue to assess, on the local and national level, how we teach multimodality in the writing curricula and how that teaching is supported by our institutional and professional structures by continuing to conduct empirical research, or what Haswell calls RAD research: replicable, aggregable, and data-based research. As of the publication of this article, more than fifteen years have passed since the old survey was launched. Browsing through prominent journals in the field on multimodal and digital composition like *Kairos* and *Computers and Composition*, we can see trajectories of development of multimodal composing, especially since 2005 when writing teachers have increasingly been exploring different ways of composing, be it hypertext or new media (see *Kairos* 10.2 on New Writing and Computer Technologies and *Computers*

and *Composition* 25.1 on media convergence); writing online (see *Computers and Composition* 27.1); or other modes such as sound writing (see *Computers and Composition* 23.3) or writing and reading with games (*Computers and Composition* 25.3 and *Computers and Composition Online* fall 2008 issue), and issues such as freeware and accessibility (*Computers and Composition Online* fall 2009 special issue). Starting in 2003, *Kairos* has begun publishing a Praxis section, which over the years has offered many practical examples of how to teach multimodality in the writing classroom. At the same time, instructors and WPAs alike tried to push multiliteracies in the writing classroom, working with limitations of technology/internet access, advocating for changes and resources (see Takayoshi and Huot). As the access to technological resources improves in our classes and with the increasing trend of moving writing classes online (if only accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic), we continue to be presented with challenges of fully integrating multimodality in all our classrooms and of ensuring productive professional development as well. In addition, multimodal composition is also tightly connected with issues of circulation and public writing as we take up new genres and networked technologies in our classrooms. We may also take advantage of networked tools for professional development such as Twitter or Slack, which can offer new ways of collaborative learning and socializing of teachers other than traditional workshops. As we look into the future of multimodality, I think we will need to critically consider the materiality of our composing processes, tools, contexts, both in our classrooms and in how we engage with programmatic professional development efforts.

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