Conference Proceedings of Back to Our Future: Rethinking College Level Education in the "New Normal"

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Abstract: None.

Introduction

Welcome to the proceedings of the 2023 College Association for Language and Literacy (CALL) Annual Conference. CALL registered as a non-profit organization in 1992. It consists of Ontario college educators who value and advocate for literacy and language skills within higher education, teaching and learning. This year's CALL conference, *Back to Our Future: Rethinking College Level Education in the "New Normal,"* was hosted by the Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning between May 24th and May 26th.

The conference featured two keynote speakers, Dr. Mia Zamora and Dr. Vershawn Young. Dr. Zamora's presentation, *Intentionally Equitable Hospitality: A Learning Design & Praxis for Centering Equity and Care,* explored current and potential modalities to generate equitable spaces of learning for every student. How can teachers foster an authentic and collective sense of belonging when designing for impactful learning? "Intentionally Equitable Hospitality" (IEH) is a facilitation praxis, a values-based approach, and a learning design for equity-in-community. IEH prioritizes the values of social justice while fostering learner agency within the learning space, while never forgetting how power and oppression work outside of that learning space. This interactive talk engaged participants in both strategies and resources whilst fostering further reflection on equity and care in the community. Dr. Young's presentation, *Developing and Assessing Learning Objectives which Honor Diverse Language Practices*, drew upon efforts within the University of Waterloo to develop language objectives for writing and communication courses reflective of paradigm shifting, global educational changes in the wake of the murder of George Floyd.

The conference brought together a collection of scholarly works and practical insights that explore the emerging shifts in higher education as we navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by the "new normal." The (32) presentations covered a wide range of topics, including, but not limited to online pedagogy, student well-being, digital literacy, inclusive education, assessment and evaluation, technology integration, and reimagining the campus experience. Along with receiving expert theories and narratives, conference attendees had the opportunity of participating in many hands-on, workshop-style sessions. The presentations shed light on the innovative practices, transformative strategies, and the cutting-edge technology revolutionizing how we impart mainstay and trending educational deliverables. The presentations encapsulated the spirit of creativity, collaboration, and knowledge found across the Ontario community college system. Seven of the conference's presenters adapted their presentations to written offerings observed in these proceedings.

Back to Our Future: Rethinking College Level Education in the "New Normal" invited colleges to engage in reflection (*back*) and

prediction (*towards our future*), as we navigate the rushing waters of current and upcoming teaching and learning processes. In the wake of the unprecedented global social disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, educational institutions were compelled to adapt rapidly to remote and hybrid learning models. As we transition from crisis response to long-term adaptation, this conference aimed to foster dialogue, share experiences, and explore innovative approaches to reshape college-level education in a world transformed by the pandemic. The conference's call for proposals challenged academics and administrators alike, to consider how we reconcile our instructional practices of the past with the educational landscape in which we now find ourselves; identifying how we can use new digital technologies and artificial intelligence tools to shape an effective future of teaching and learning for ourselves and our students.

Reconciling past instructional practices with today's educational landscape requires a thoughtful and deliberate approach. We can begin by reflecting on the instructional practices of the past and the reasons behind them, considering the goals, methods, and beliefs that guided our teaching and learning and outlining any strengths or weaknesses. As we advance towards a deeper understanding of current educational environments, we familiarize ourselves with trends, research, educational priorities, the exploration of technological advancements, shifts within student demographics and expectations, and, of course, new pedagogical approaches. Hopefully, this exploration can serve to identify and strengthen a bridge between past and present pedogeological priorities. Our willingness to adapt and blend will depend heavily upon our willingness to embrace and evaluate innovation. #CommittedToCultivatingAGrowthMindset

Depending upon how educators choose to engage them, new digital technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) tools are poised to transform teaching and learning, provide opportunities for enhanced engagement, personalized instruction, and shift learning outcomes. AI tools can supply vast quantities of student learning data and potentially better inform administrative and instructional decision-making. With respect to curriculum delivery in particular, AI tools, (like virtual reality *VR* and augmented reality *AR)*, can provide more engaging and interactive learning experiences. They also allow students to better collaborate with their peers in remote settings. Despite AI's potential advantages, it is essential to remain mindful that digital technologies and AI are apparatus in teaching and learning, not viable substitutions. However, with careful planning, ethical considerations, and a focus on integration, these new technological applications can serve broader pedagogical goals. We are challenged with implementing these tools while ensuring equitable access and addressing potential privacy and data security concerns.

We hope these proceedings capture the authenticity and essence of some of the conference presentations, or stated more concisely, that they mirror the collective wisdom of the scholars, practitioners, and thought

leaders who convened at the 2023 CALL conference. Within this offering, you will find a rich tapestry of ideas, best practices, and evidence-based strategies that successfully reframe traditional teaching, learning, and student engagement paradigms. The proceedings can serve as a valuable resource for educators, administrators, policymakers, and researchers who seek to understand the key issues, trends, and solutions on this rapidly evolving educational terrain.

We express our sincere appreciation to the conference organizers, distinguished keynote speakers, session moderators, and others who dedicated their time and expertise to ensuring the success and academic rigour of the conference. Their invaluable contributions have enabled us to assemble this comprehensive collection of research and insights, providing a platform for meaningful exchange and collaboration in higher education.

As you embark on this journey through the conference proceedings, it is our hope that the insight provided here, will ignite your academic imagination, provoke thoughtful discourse, and serve as a tool for your professional paths forward. We wish everyone a happy continuous learning experience and active engagement in their higher education communities. May this publication serve as a catalyst for continued inquiry, resilience, and transformation, as we navigate the challenges and seize the opportunities in the years ahead.

Thank you for joining us on this exploration of educational innovations!

Disclaimer: Whilst we have undertaken the task of editing these conference proceedings, it is to be understood that we do not assume responsibility for the content, ideologies, style, or academic rigor provided in the following papers. In keeping with documented conference proceedings, our revisions were strictly focused on general copy editing, including ensuring adherence to formatting guidelines, language clarity, and/or grammatical accuracy. Please note that the papers included in this journal edition represent the original works of the respective authors, who hold full responsibility for the content and the ideas presented within their papers. Any views, opinions, or conclusions expressed in the papers are solely those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect those of its editors.

Further, editorial efforts sought to maintain the authenticity content offered in the presentations delivered during the conference. We recognize and celebrate the close alignment between papers and their corresponding presentations and endeavoured to preserve the integrity of the original presented work, to the best of our abilities. Therefore, we request readers to kindly approach these conference proceedings with the required contextual discernment. Any discrepancies, inaccuracies, or issues pertaining to the content itself should be directed to the respective authors, as we cannot assume responsibility for the veracity, or substance of the papers beyond our aforementioned copy-editing duties.

We hope that these recorded conference proceedings provide a valuable resource for academic and professional purposes.