

## PROMISING PRACTICE

# #CampusScavengerHunt: A Professional Development Workshop Using Digital Literacy to Build Student's Self- Efficacy and Sense of Belonging on Campus

Tricia Edgel

Sandra McCarstle

Norma Reyes

Angela Leibold

<https://doi.org/10.36896/3.2pp2>

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Tricia Edgel** is a PhD student in developmental education (DE) at Texas State University (TXST) with a focus on postsecondary literacy. Her research interests include how self-efficacy and sense of belonging intersect for students enrolled in developmental reading and writing. She currently serves on the Common Experience Committee.

**Sandra McCarstle** is a PhD student in DE at TXST. She holds an MA in DE and in elementary education and a BA in business administration. Her research interests include sense of belonging and motivation practices, as well as P-16 curriculum alignment and students' self-efficacy as they progress through their educational milestones.

**Norma Reyes** is a PhD student in DE with a concentration in learning support at TXST. She holds an MA in secondary education and a BA in English. Her passions include curriculum writing, teacher mentoring, and helping students become mentor leaders. Other interests include advising and supporting students in their transition from high school to college.

**Angela Leibold** is an MA student in DE with a concentration in learning support at TXST. She holds an MA in applied philosophy and ethics, a BA in philosophy, and TXST professional ethics certification. Her research interests include development of learning support centers and support opportunities and programs for traditional and non-traditional postsecondary learners.

College bound students are faced with not only navigating a new environment but also faced with finding their “place” in a new community. Educators have a role to support students’ academic growth, self-efficacy (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020; Bandura, 1977), and sense of belonging (Brady et al., 2020; Hurtado & Carter, 1997) on campus. However, many educators are only explicitly taught about the need to support students’ academic needs. These practitioners need professional development to build their understanding of the importance of increasing students’ self-efficacy and fostering a sense of belonging on campus. Professional development in these two areas provides support for instructors as they extend their hand to students. In this paper we describe a short professional development workshop designed for teaching university seminar instructors about the importance of actively increasing their students’ self-efficacy and sense of belonging on campus by utilizing digital literacies (Andres, 2020; Gee, 2012) as a way to build campus community and classroom engagement (Clarke & Wilson, 2016) via Instagram Stories in their class assignments.

This professional development workshop is motivated by the reality that many students arrive on campus uncertain about their ability to succeed in college and are at a loss for how to navigate the vast university systems (Araujo et al., 2014). Student’s questions surrounding accessing financial aid, registration, and student housing often add to the stress of academic coursework. For most incoming freshmen, the move to campus is their first foray into true independence, and while it is definitely exciting, it can also be daunting.

We created a professional development workshop geared towards university seminar instructors because this low-stakes course is usually required of all incoming freshmen and thus provides a great opportunity to develop student’s self-efficacy and sense of belonging early on in their academic career. University seminar courses are typically designed as small classes so instructors can foster community building while teaching first-year college students about how to “do college.” Frequently, university seminar instructors include lessons centered on time-management, navigating university services, exploring career interests, and helping students find their academic home

### Corresponding Author

Tricia Edgel, MA, Graduate Program in Developmental Education  
Texas State University  
601 University Drive | San Marcos, Texas 78666-4684  
Email: pae19@txstate.edu

including organizations where they feel they belong. University seminar instructors represent a diverse mix of professors, graduate students, and staff members from every discipline on campus. Our workshop is aimed at helping university seminar instructors understand the importance of building students' self-efficacy and sense of belonging on their campus and finding purposeful ways to facilitate developing these sociocognitive constructs in their assigned coursework.

### Theoretical Framework

This professional development workshop is framed by three sociocognitive theories including self-efficacy, sense of belonging, and d/Discourse communities. Each of these three frameworks offer research and theory that can help students find their way through the university systems and begin to find themselves as scholars and full members of their academic community.

#### Self-Efficacy

The first component of our theoretical framework is self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy is a student's belief in her ability to succeed, in this case both within the university system, and within her academic coursework (Bandura, 1991). While students are adapting to a new school setting, many other factors, such as self-esteem, motivation and perseverance will influence a student's choice, actions, and abilities to succeed both personally and academically (van Dinther et al., 2020). As students are learning to overcome academic obstacles, the skills utilized within self-efficacy development will entail the ways students are able to handle college learning and self-regulation (Barrows et al., 2013). While self-efficacy has been studied through a variety of constructs, student engagement both in school identity and academic motivation is needed in order for students to thrive in their relationship with their educational goals (Dogan, 2015). Furthermore, when educators are able to connect with students, positive outcomes are discovered (Dogan, 2015). Educator effectiveness is defined with expectations, strategies and ultimately the metacognitive skills required to enforce proper learning in the classroom (Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003). Peiffer et al. (2020) examined student's

self-efficacy in multiple settings. Researchers found students in higher education are focusing on specialized study-related domains, which not only influenced their skills and transfer of knowledge, but also motivated students to learn. With increased self-efficacy, students are able to apply effort and understand challenges, which acts to influence student motivation (Andres, 2020). Therefore, the impact educators have on improving self-efficacy within student learning stems from the skills and strategies educators continue to learn and apply to their instruction (see Appendix A). The second component of our theoretical framework is sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

#### Sense of Belonging

The second theoretical framework focuses on students' sense of belonging. This framework is grounded on Astin's 1984 theory of student involvement. Sense of belonging is a feeling of being supported by, and respected within, a certain group. Yuval-Davis (2004) stated, "Belonging is a deep emotional need of people" (p. 215). Incoming freshmen are vulnerable to feelings of isolation and liminality, and frequently question if they are up for the tasks that college demands, and if they truly belong. Developing a sense of belonging is critical to the success of first-year college students, a sense of belonging is positively associated with greater academic achievement and skill development. In college, feeling a sense of belonging may lead students to engage more deeply with their studies, leading to persistence and success. A study by O'Keeffe (2013) found developing

a students' sense of belonging is critical to their college success. This study found students who report higher levels of belongingness in their educational environment have overall better psychological outcomes than students who demonstrate a lower sense of belonging. A long-term social-belonging intervention study by Brady et al. (2020) found a positive correlation between a brief first year of college intervention and future career satisfaction and success, psychological well-being, and community involvement and leadership. By focusing on ways to increase students' self-efficacy and sense of belonging (see Appendix B), university seminar instructors can help mitigate the self-doubt that moves into students' minds.

In college,  
feeling a sense  
of belonging may  
lead students  
to engage more  
deeply, leading  
to persistence  
and success.

### **d/Discourse Communities**

Our third theoretical framework is d/Discourse communities (Gee, 2012). We suggest that by teaching university seminar instructors how to use Instagram Stories as a tool (see Appendix C), instructors can build on a Discourse—digital literacy—with which most students are familiar. Instagram is used by 1 billion active users per month, with 500 million Instagram users logging on daily to Instagram Stories (Mohsin, 2020). Using a comfortable tool will boost students' self-efficacy and sense of belonging while turning a social skill into an academic one. By utilizing Instagram in a bidirectional model of knowledge demonstration, students and instructors can practice content creation and demonstrate knowledge of the assigned content (Castek & Manderino, 2017). Students will utilize Instagram Stories to create content demonstrating their knowledge in short videos and picture essays in individual and group contexts.

### **Goals and Expectations for the Professional Development Project**

The goal of our professional development workshop is two-fold. First, we aim to instruct instructors about the importance of fostering students' self-efficacy and sense of belonging. This goal will be accomplished via informative group sessions where the basic framework of these constructs is outlined, and the instructors share ways they have seen them demonstrated in their classrooms, and brainstorm ways to facilitate consciously and strategically working to foster students' self-efficacy and sense of belonging. The workshop aims to make these constructs visible within the instructors' praxis. The second goal of the workshop is to engage the university seminar instructors in creating a Campus Scavenger Hunt Instagram activity. The instructors would think of a list of university departments and services that students should know about (e.g., Office of Dean of Students, Office of Disability Services). Then with these types of services in mind, the university seminar instructors would create an assignment description and rubric for a Campus Scavenger Hunt using Instagram stories. We do not want to be prescriptive here or stifle university seminar instructors' creativity, so loosely, the assignment description explains how students create Instagram Stories about how to access the various services included on the scavenger hunt. By including hashtags and sharing their digital stories, students create a web of stories that links them across university seminar courses on campus. Through their Instagram

#CampusScavengerHunt stories, students will be able to read individual narratives (Clarke & Wilson, 2016) in a platform that is more inviting and familiar than a Canvas discussion board or PowerPoint, and with their university seminar instructor's foundational support, students can begin the process of finding not only the academic services they need, but the collegiate community they want.

### **Conclusion**

This workshop extends university seminar instructors understanding of self-efficacy and the importance of increasing students' self-efficacy on campus. Furthermore, the workshop explicates "sense of belonging" from a catchphrase to a critical social construct and provides ways for instructors to genuinely support students' sense of belonging on campus and in academia. Finally, the workshop offers an opportunity for university seminar instructors to learn and become comfortable using Instagram Stories as a pedagogical device. Instagram Stories is only an introduction to social media literacies; instructors can expand their use of them, such as assignments utilizing Twitter, Mural, or Padlet. The ultimate goal of this professional development workshop is to help instructors learn new pedagogical ways to increase students' self-efficacy by learning about the various services on campus and increasing students' sense of belonging by utilizing a social media platform in an academic way. Our workshop opens a creative pedagogical door for instructors by showing them how to work with their students in a digital literacy their students already thrive in. This workshop shows both instructors and students that Instagram Stories can be a social as well as "academic" space. Additionally, our workshop girds university seminar instructors in a theoretical understanding of self-efficacy, sense of belonging, and digital literacy as a d/Discourse community. This theoretical foundation will naturally inform their instruction, and more importantly, offer them deeper insight into the sociocognitive needs of their students.

#StudentSuccess #Self-Efficacy #SenseofBelonging

## References

- Andres, H. (2020). The role of active teaching, academic self-efficacy, and learning behaviors in student performance. *Journal of International Education in Business*, 13(2), 221–238. <https://doi-org/10.1108/JIEB-02-2020-0017>
- Araujo, N., Carlin, D., Clarke, B., Morieson, L., Lukas, K., & Wilson, R. (2014). Belonging in the first year: A creative discipline cohort case study. *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education*, 5(2), 21–31. <http://doi.org/10.5204/intjfyhe.v5i2.240>
- Astin, A. W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 25(4), 297–308.
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191–215.
- Bandura, A. (1991). Social cognitive theory of self-regulation. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 248–287.
- Barrows, J., Dunn, S., & Lloyd, C. A. (2013). Anxiety, self-efficacy, and college exam grades. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 1(3), 204–208. <https://doi-org/10.13189/ujer.2013.010310>
- Brady, S., Cohen, G., Jarvis, S., & Walton, G. (2020). A brief social-belonging intervention in college improves adult outcomes for Black Americans. *Science Advances*, 6(18). <http://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aay3689>
- Bray-Clark, N., & Bates, R. (2003). Self-efficacy beliefs and teacher effectiveness: Implications for professional development. *Professional Educator*, 26(1), 13–22.
- Castek, J., & Manderino, M. (2017). A planning framework for integrating digital literacies for disciplinary learning. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 60(6), 697–700. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.637>
- Clarke, B., & Wilson, R. (2016). *The ethos of belonging: A narrative model approach to student engagement 2011–2015*. RMIT University. <https://www.rmit.edu.au/content/dam/rmit/rmit-images/college-of-dsc-images/schools/media-and-communication/projects/belonging-project/belonging-project-ethos-belonging.pdf>
- Dogan, U. (2015). Student engagement, academic self-efficacy, and academic motivation as predictors of academic performance. *Anthropologist*, 20(3), 553–561. <https://doi-org./10.1080/09720073.2015.11891759>
- Gee, J. P. (2012). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Hurtado, S., & Carter, D. F. (1997). Effects of college transition and perceptions of the campus racial climate on Latino college students' sense of belonging. *Sociology of Education*, 324–345.
- O'Keefe, P. (2013). A sense of belonging: Improving student retention. *College Student Journal* 47(4), 605–613. [https://researchrepository.rmit.edu.au/discovery/fulldisplay/alma9921862552801341/61RMIT\\_INST:ResearchRepository](https://researchrepository.rmit.edu.au/discovery/fulldisplay/alma9921862552801341/61RMIT_INST:ResearchRepository)
- Mohsin, M. (2020, July 6). *10 Instagram stats every marketer should know in 2020*. Oberlo. <https://www.oberlo.com/blog/instagram-stats-every-marketer-should-know>
- Peiffer, H., Ellwart, T., & Preckel, F. (2020). Ability self-concept and self-efficacy in higher education: An empirical differentiation based on their factorial structure. *PLOS ONE*, 15(7), 1–24. <https://doi-org./10.1371/journal.pone.0234604>
- Schunk, D. H., & DiBenedetto, M. K. (2020). Motivation and social cognitive theory. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 60, Article 101832. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2019.101832>
- van Dinther, M., Dochy, F., & Segers, M. (2011). Factors affecting students' self-efficacy in higher education. *Educational Research Review*, 6(2), 95–108. <https://doi-org./10.1016/j.edurev.2010.10.003>
- Yuval-Davis, N. (2004). Borders, boundaries and the politics of belonging. In S. May, T. Modood, & J. Squires (Eds.), *Ethnicity, nationalism and minority rights* (pp. 214–230). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511489235.011>