

Write Experience™ Leads to Improved Writing Skills

Improving College Student Writing Skills

ABOUT THE STUDY



About Write Experience

Write Experience is an online writing instruction application dedicated to improving students' writing skills by providing students with frequent opportunities to practice their writing and receive immediate feedback. Students receive an immediate grade on their writing along with specific guidance on how to revise their work through artificial intelligence-based tools (AI). Instructors can assign one or more writing prompts to students and monitor individual student and overall class performance.

The development of effective writing skills is widely recognized as one of the most important college outcomes, and it is widely believed that using digital learning tools to support post-secondary instruction improves student engagement and ultimately increases student learning. This study examined the effectiveness of a widely-used, post-secondary digital instructional tool, Write Experience, an online learning solution, employing automated essay scoring, dedicated to improving students' written communication skills.

MarketingWorks and SEG Measurement, two independent research firms, conducted a comprehensive study of Write Experience's effectiveness during the spring semester of 2013 using an array of qualitative and quantitative methods. The primary goal of the study was to determine improvement in writing skills in business communication classes using the Write Experience application (treatment group) as compared to improvement in writing skills in classes not using Write Experience (control group), with both groups using the same print textbooks.

A total of 26 instructors in 34 developmental writing courses in 26 different institutions of higher education participated in the research, including 11 treatment instructors and 15 controls. Improvement of writing skills among students in classes using the Write Experience application (treatment) was compared to writing skill improvement among students in classes not using Write Experience (control). A pretest and posttest of writing skills taught in the course were administered

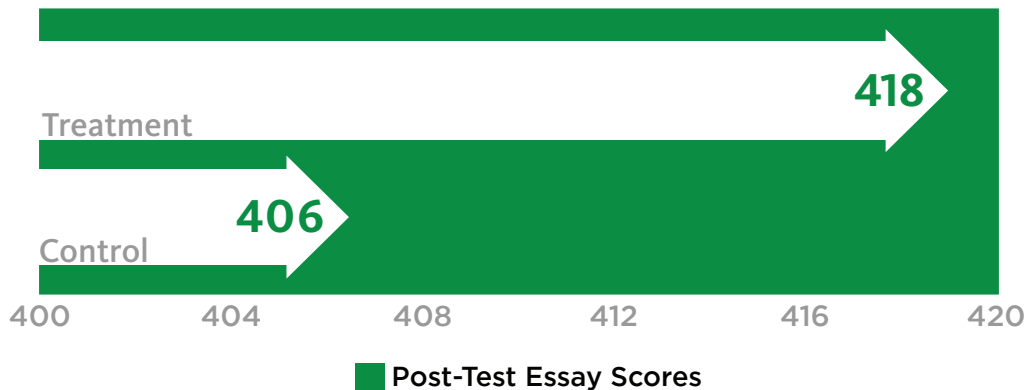
as a basis for comparing the amount of writing skill improvement that occurred. In addition, a qualitative study of Write Experience was conducted to obtain feedback from the same group of instructors and a sample of 22 students using Write Experience at the beginning and end of the study and bi-weekly throughout the semester.

Write Experience Leads to Much Stronger Writing Skills

Students in classes using Write Experience showed substantially greater improvement in writing skills than students in classes that did not use Write Experience. The Write Experience users achieved statistically significant higher writing essay posttest scores (Mean=418) than non-users (Mean=406) (see Figure 1). The level of growth of the Write Experience users is consistent with a student moving from the 50th to the 63rd percentile. These effects indicate that using Write Experience has a significant impact on the growth of students' writing skills. The results also indicate that Write Experience is equally effective for men and women and for students of different ethnicities.

Figure 1
Students Who Use Write Experience Improve Their Writing Skills More Than Students Who Do Not Use Write Experience

Post-Test Essay Writing Scores
 (Range 200-800)



“I think this is a very beneficial program for students. I have seen genuine growth and the further development of students’ writing skills.”

Joan Blewitt
 Assistant Professor,
 King’s College

“The greatest strength of this product was that it showed you writer’s models. I really liked this because it let you know what bad responses and good responses are supposed to look like. This was very helpful when writing and will be helpful in the future.”

Orthalia Gant
 Student, Henry Ford
 Community College

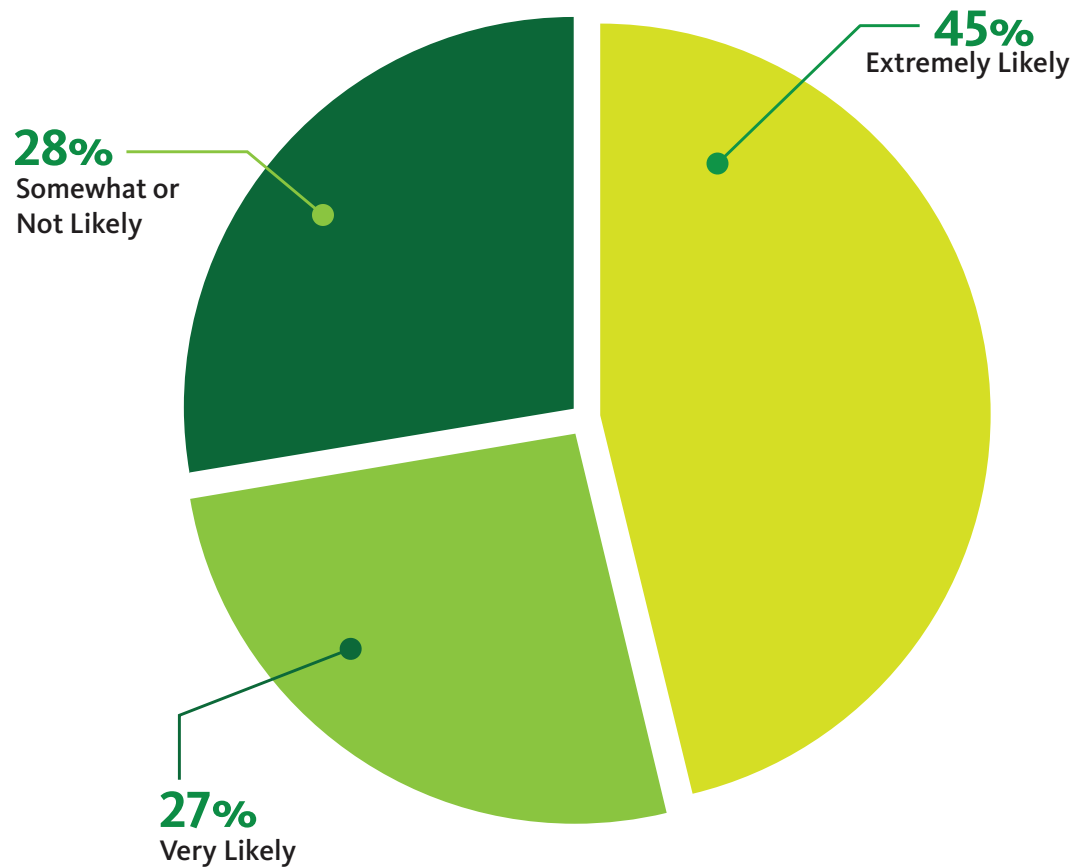
“It is an eye-opener for the students, as this is an area where most students think they can write a paper once and it is an A. The learning happened all around them. This process gives them good feedback that they must consider.”

Virginia Green
Participating Instructor,
Woodbury University

All instructors felt that Write Experience contributed to the improvement of student learning outcomes, with 36% saying outcomes were greatly improved, 36% saying somewhat improved, and 27% saying slightly improved. At the end of the semester, the 11 treatment instructors were asked to rate the likelihood of their institutions adopting Write Experience, and 72% indicated that they would be extremely likely (45%) or very likely (27%) to do so (Figure 2). In addition, almost half of the instructors said they would be extremely or very likely to recommend Write Experience to their colleagues.

Figure 2

Instructors Report Their Institutions are Likely to Adopt Write Experience



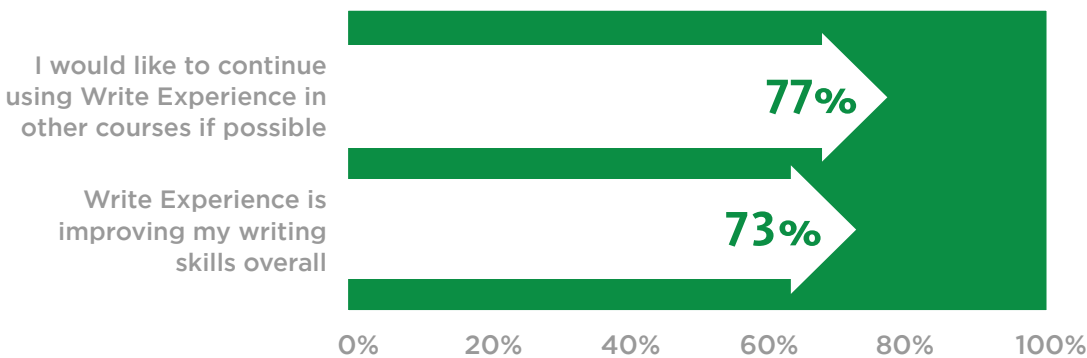
A total of 21 students sampled from all 11 treatment classes were identified at the beginning of the semester to provide feedback about their experiences with Write Experience throughout the research study. Midway through the course, students were interviewed by phone; 77% said they'd like to continue using Write Experience in other writing courses if possible and 73% said that Write Experience was improving their writing skills overall (Figure 3).

"It is easy to use and it gives good sound feedback. Overall, Write Experience helped me with my writing process. It showed me my weaknesses, and I have become a better writer."

Daniel Campione
Student, Central Michigan University

Figure 3

Students Report: Write Experience Improves Their Writing and that They Would Like to Use It In Other Courses



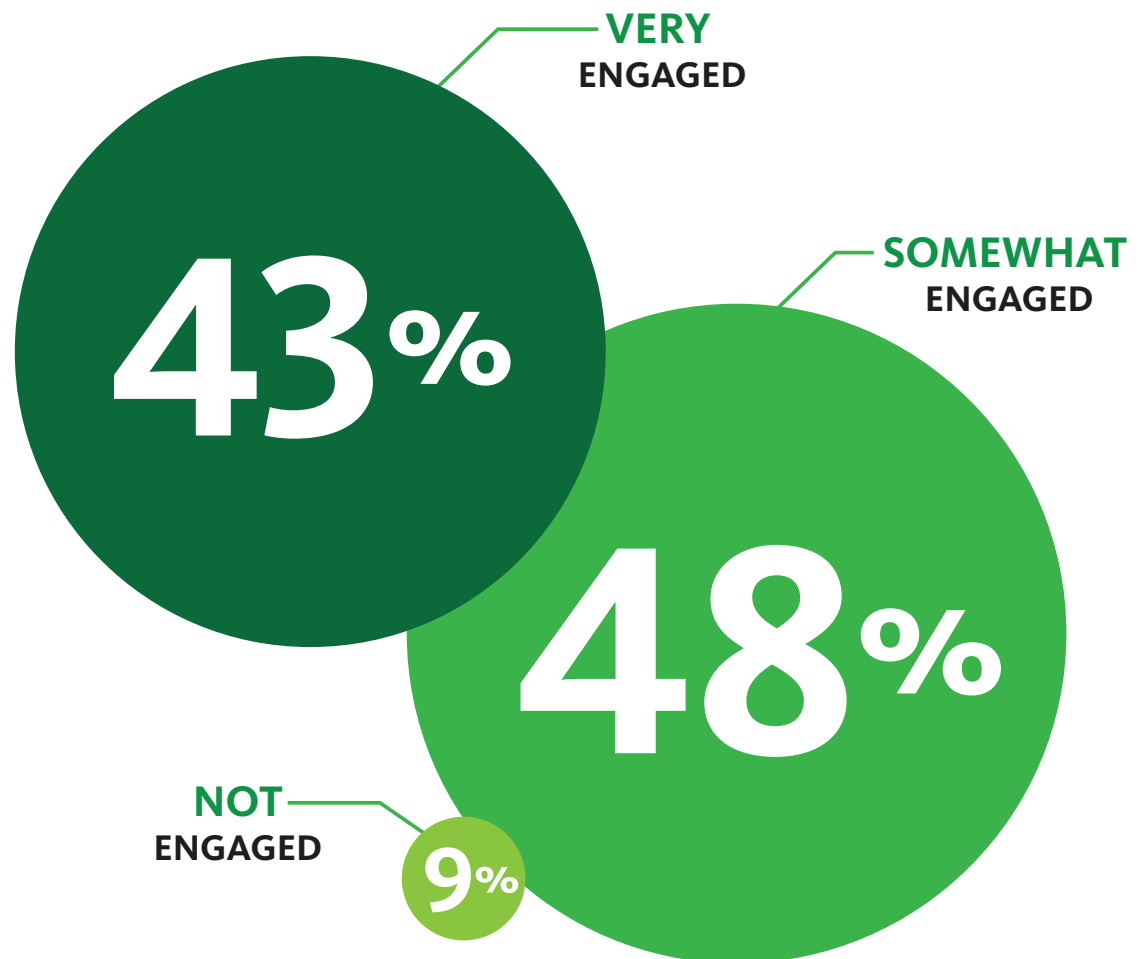
“The greatest strength is all the tools available. It is not just a program to make you write; it makes you write and learn what you did wrong. It is a clear and simple program to follow and use.”

Karishma Chandwani
Student, Woodbury University

Write Experience Leads to Increased Student Engagement

Overall, 91% of instructors felt that students were either very engaged (36%) or somewhat engaged (55%) with the coursework. And over half of them felt that students’ engagement was positively impacted by their use of Write Experience. Students confirmed their high level of engagement, with 43% reporting that the coursework with Write Experience was very engaging and 48% reporting that the coursework with Write Experience was somewhat engaging (Figure 4).

Figure 4
Students Using Write Experience are Engaged in the Course



Conclusion

Students in classes using Writing Experience, employing the automated essay scoring system, showed substantially greater improvement in writing skills than students in classes that did not use Write Experience. The level of growth is consistent with a student moving from the 50th to the 63rd percentile. It is clear from student essay scores and teacher and student self-reports that Write Experience is an effective tool for improving student writing skills and engagement.

This research was supported by a grant from Cengage Learning.

“I find Write Experience to be a good tool in the way it specifically focuses on student writing skills.”

Treva Clark
Assistant Professor,
Lebanon Valley College



Cengage Learning is a leading provider of innovative teaching, learning, and research solutions for academic, professional, and library markets worldwide. The company's products and services are designed to foster academic excellence and professional development, increase engagement, improve learning outcomes, and deliver authoritative information to people whenever and wherever they need it. Through the company's unique position within both the library and academic markets, Cengage Learning is providing integrated learning solutions that bridge from the library to the classroom. www.cengage.com

Write Experience efficacy research has been peer reviewed and will be presented in a prestigious venue: American Educational Research Association. Philadelphia 2014.

Source Code: 14P-IN0018
ISBN: 978-1-133-36741-3

Copyright ©2014 Cengage Learning. All Rights Reserved.