



GSOLE 2021 Welcome and Conference Site Tour

Below you'll find the text for the President's Welcome message, as well as the accompanying site tour—both are available in video form on the “Visions and Sites” Conference Portal.

Welcome everyone to the fourth annual “Visions and Sites of Online Literacy Education” conference, sponsored by the Global Society of Online Literacy Educators. I'm Dan Seward, President of GSOLE.

It's remarkable to think about how much has changed since we met *last* January when GSOLE's all-day online conference was still something of a novelty—before the COVID-19 pandemic compelled us from each other and all onsite professional gatherings. Now, it's difficult to find a teacher who hasn't taught an online class, much less a student who hasn't taken one. We've witnessed over the past year unprecedented growth in our field's *experiential* knowledge of online literacy education. I'm proud to say that, under the leadership of past President Scott Warnock and with the efforts of many member volunteers, we in GSOLE were able to help colleagues in our field continue to make meaningful contributions to their students' lives and learning. I know many of you who weren't then members of GSOLE contributed in your own ways at your own institutions as generous teachers and mentors. The circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic would have been all the more unfortunate were it not for the amazing adaptability, dedication, and conscientiousness of so many teachers and students educating themselves and others in how to take advantages of the affordances of digital technologies.

But along with this remarkable proliferation of *experiential* knowledge about online literacy education, we now too have many more personal stories recounting vividly how access and inclusion can never be achieved simply by purchasing devices and installing software. We see clearly that technologies and the social media they enable aren't ever neutral in practice. Indeed, in broader society, the very technologies used throughout 2020 to document violence and bias against Black Americans, as well as spur us all to confront racism more directly, have also been used within other online communities to undermine democratic institutions and reinforce White supremacy. The events of 2020 remind us all the more that the affordances of technology are only as accessible and inclusive as those who use the technologies want them to be. And these events also remind us that we must share our stories, listen to those of others, and reflect critically on our experiences to ensure we aren't standing in the way of our own aspirations for more diverse and just schools and societies.

Towards those ends—sharing, listening, and reflecting—I will call attention to the excellent program put together by GSOLE Vice President Cat Mahaffey and the 2021 Conference Planning Committee. The program includes over 60 different presenters speaking on a range of traditional and current OLI topics in a variety of virtual formats. It also features two timely plenary addresses, one from Dr. Lou Maraj, cofounder of the Digital Black Lit and Composition mentorship network and author of *Black or Right: Anti/Racist Campus Rhetorics*, and another from immediate past President Scott Warnock, author of *Teaching Writing Online: How and Why* and *Writing Together: Ten Weeks Teaching and Studenting in an Online Writing Course*. Our hope is that you'll join us to listen to the insights and stories of fellow attendees and share your own—all while we reflect on the experiences and values that bring us together.

For those of you who have attended past GSOLE conferences, you'll find that, though we're now hosted on a new site and use a new membership platform, you'll navigate the conference similarly to previous years. For those of you who are new to a GSOLE conference, allow me to give you a quick tour.

CONFERENCE SITE TOUR

All conference activities can be accessed on our GSOLE 2021 Conference Portal page <gsole.org/conference/2021portal>, which is itself accessible from the <gsole.org> homepage. At the top of the Conference Portal, you'll find a "Happening Now" section that will be updated regularly throughout the conference to give you quick and convenient access to ongoing activities anytime you arrive at site. On January 29, when the all-day synchronous meeting takes place, be on the lookout here for a link to our "Keeping the Conversation Going" forum, where attendees can post thoughts on presentations they've just seen and interact with each other through asynchronous discussions. Everyone posting to these discussions will be entered in prize drawings that take place throughout the day—winners will be posted on the page.

Farther down on the Conference Portal, you'll find the full Conference Program and guidance on participation. You'll also see links to the Praxis Post(er) Hall and the Presentation rooms—each of which can also be accessed directly from the Conference Program page.

To view individual Praxis Posters and enter the Presentation rooms, you'll need to login with your GSOLE member account after having registered for the conference. You'll know you're logged into the GSOLE site if your name appears at the top of the page next to the "Change Password" option. Consider taking a moment to adjust your profile by adding a short bio and adjusting the privacy settings so other members can see your name on the discussion forums and on the member directory. If you don't, your posts will show up as "Anonymous."

While the Presentation Rooms won't open until the day of the synchronous session, the Post(er) Hall is open now as part of the asynchronous portion of the conference. We encourage conference attendees to view post(er)s and share comments with the presenters and other attendees in discussion forums ahead of the synchronous meeting. All those who post comments to these individual Praxis Post(er) forums will be entered into the prize drawings.

Opening events of the synchronous session, finally, will start at 8am Eastern Standard Time in the conference Lobby, an open access Zoom session with a waiting room. The Lobby room will be open all day as a place for attendees to ask questions about GSOLE or request support in participating in conference activities. During our two intersession breaks, we'll also host informational presentations from our sponsors in the Lobby, who are listed on the program.

With the synchronous session coming up, we encourage you to register, set-up your GSOLE profile, peruse the program, and plan your participation. We'll have attendees from across all North American time zones, as well as some from other continents—so we understand that most attendees won't log in for every session. We hope you'll join us whenever you can and we encourage you to come back later to the site to view what you may have missed in our conference archives, once they're posted. Welcome to "Visions and Sites" 2021!