

Topical Reference List:

Toward Developing Best Practices: A Study on the Perspectives of K – 12 Online Instructors

Kimberly Carter

Education 518, Section D06

Dr. Jeffrey Savage

Liberty University

Abstract

This paper includes a reference list of literature relating to perspectives of effective K – 8 virtual instructors as related to instructional strategies and their perspectives regarding influence of prior teaching experience and professional development and training for virtual teachers as related to virtual instruction pedagogy. In general, the literature seems to indicate that effective online instructors utilize clear, timely communication, build a sense of caring community with their students, maintain high expectations with rigorous content, support student success through scaffolding, and coordinate knowledge of content, pedagogy, and technology. Success of virtual instructors has been linked to amount of prior classroom teaching experience in the traditional school setting, amount of training and professional development in online learning, degree of flexibility of the teacher to work with students, and a focus which is student-centered. Much of the research available has been at the high school or college level and has been qualitative in nature.

Keywords: Professional Development For Online, Distance Education NOT Higher Education NOT Library, Online Learning AND Professional Development, Virtual Teach* AND Professional Development, Virtual Classrooms, Teacher Effectiveness AND Online Learning, Online Teach* AND Professional Development, Online Teach* AND Teacher Effectiveness, Teacher Effectiveness AND Distance Education, Online Education AND Teacher Effectiveness

Topical Reference List: Toward Developing Best Practices:
A Study on the Perspectives of K – 8 Online Instructors

The purpose of this study is to determine the perspectives held by K – 8 virtual teachers concerning their instructional roles to gain insight into the instructional strategies supporting a teacher’s coordination of content, technology, and pedagogy. A related purpose is to determine the perspectives held by K - 8 virtual teachers concerning impact of prior teaching experience and professional development and training for virtual teachers as related to virtual instruction pedagogy. Research Questions: What are the pedagogical practices used by K – 8 virtual teachers, and why do virtual teachers utilize these practices? What training components are essential for virtual educators and what college coursework is appropriate for virtual teacher training? In what types of school sponsored professional development and training do K – 8 virtual teachers participate and how does this training influence K – 8 virtual teacher pedagogical practices? How does prior classroom experience impact transition to successful virtual education?

References

Archambault, L., & Crippen, K. (2009). K--12 distance educators at work: Who's teaching online across the United States. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 41(4), 363-391. Retrieved from <http://www.iste.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048/Template.cfm?Section=Publications>

Abstract: Due to the current proliferation of virtual schools, a growing number of teachers are facing the challenge of teaching online. This study examines the demographic nature and experiences of K--12 online teachers. Findings show that online teachers are experienced in the traditional classroom, as indicated by their years of experience and the level of their advanced

degrees. These teachers seek a better means to engage with students, a greater sense of community, and the ability to teach without the constraints of traditional teachings, such as a bell schedule or issues of classroom management. Data also suggest that aspects of teaching online, such as the number of classes/students, student motivation, and lack of support, can be overwhelming at times. Through this study, we are able to gain a better understanding of the educators themselves, including specific advantages and challenges of teaching in an online environment. [ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR]

Archambault, L. (2011). The practitioner's perspective on teacher education: Preparing for the k-12 online classroom. *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education, 19*(1), 73-91. Chesapeake, VA: AACE. Retrieved from <http://www.editlib.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048/p/31410>.

Abstract: Little is known about the population of educators who teach online, especially with relationship to preparation from their teacher education programs. This article discusses the results of a national survey of K-12 online teachers from across the nation to ascertain how prepared they felt they were with regard to three key areas: technology, pedagogy, and content, including combinations of these domains, as described by the technological pedagogical content knowledge framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Overall, K-12 online teachers indicated that they felt the most prepared in the areas of pedagogy, content, and pedagogical content. They felt least prepared in the areas of technology, including technological pedagogical knowledge, technological content knowledge, and technological pedagogical content knowledge.

Implications for the field of teacher education are discussed, including the need to more fully integrate technology within the coursework and field experiences of teacher candidates, and the

need to create courses, or specific modules within existing courses, to address topics of importance to virtual teaching.

Barbour, M. K., Kinsella, J., Wicks, M., & Toker, S. (2009). Continuing change in a virtual world: Training and recruiting instructors. *Journal of Technology & Teacher Education*, 17(4), 437-457. Retrieved <https://www-ace-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu:8888/>

Abstract: The process of teacher identification, selection, initial training, and on-going professional development that has developed at the Illinois Virtual High School (IVHS) over the past seven years is described and discussed in this article. Validation was based upon existing practices and research. To provide background, the creation and initial development of the IVHS is described. Some of the issues within the hiring process and professional development that the IVHS continues to struggle with are examined including teacher certification and the changing nature of technology. The article concludes with a recommendation that teacher education programs assist in addressing these challenges to support IVHS and other virtual schools.

[ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR]

DiPietro, M. (2010). Virtual school pedagogy: The instructional practices of k-12 virtual school teachers. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 42(3), 327-354.
doi:10.2190/EC.42.3.e

Abstract: K-12 virtual schooling is gaining recognition as an alternative to the traditional face-to-face educational setting by providing students with access to anytime, anywhere learning opportunities. There is a current need for research on the pedagogy of K-12 virtual school teaching in order to understand the coordination of content, pedagogy, and technology underlying the delivery of a virtual school course. The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding for the instructional practices of K-12 virtual school teachers. The findings

resulting from this analysis highlight the relationship between the participants' beliefs, goals, and practices related to virtual school teaching. Analysis revealed several unique qualities of the practices used by virtual school teachers that have relevant implications for the training programs educating virtual school teachers, the developing body of policy underlying virtual schools, and future research. [ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR]

Ferdig, R.E., Cavanaugh, C., DiPietro, M., Black, E.W. & Dawson, K. (2009). Virtual schooling standards and best practices for teacher education. *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education*, 17(4), 479-503. Chesapeake, VA: AACE. Retrieved from <http://www.editlib.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048/p/30481>.

Abstract: Abstract: The number of students taking online courses in K-12 has increased exponentially since the inception of virtual schools in 1996. However, K-12 virtual schooling is a relatively new concept for those involved in teacher education. As teacher education departments build pre-service preparation programs, in-service professional development opportunities, and state-wide endorsements and certifications, they will need to do so with a firm grasp of existing standards and practices within the field. This paper describes several major attempts to form standards and best practices. In doing so, it also explores the research backing and the need for additional research to support such standards. The paper concludes with a discussion about the various roles future teachers might play in virtual school work and the associated standards that would guide their instruction.

Hewett, B. L., & Powers, C. (2007). Guest editors' introduction: online teaching and learning: Preparation, development, and organizational communication. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 16(1), 1-11. doi:10.1207/s15427625tcq1601_1

Abstract: The article presents an introduction to the "Technical Communication Quarterly," 2007 issue. It features online teaching and learning in the areas of preparation, development, and organizational communication. Online teaching and learning in academic and business organizations have become a common trend that it is conceptualized to be an informal and formal delivery of learning and professional development activities. This issue primarily discusses the organizational concerns and preparation as well as the development strategies for online educators.

Oliver, K., Osborne, J., Patel, R., & Kleiman, G. (2009). Issues surrounding the deployment of a new statewide virtual public school. *Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, 10(1), 37-49. Retrieved from <http://www.infoagepub.com/>

Abstract: The North Carolina Virtual Public School completed its first session during the summer of 2007. Evaluation results revealed differences between accelerated and credit recovery students, including a significantly higher likelihood for accelerated students to rate their courses as high quality, to express interest in taking another online course, and to possess the necessary prerequisite technical skills to be successful online. Three themes emerged from qualitative comments: advantages of online learning, course design issues, and student readiness for online learning. Teacher comments suggested several readiness factors impacted student performance online, including appropriate technical skill, proper technology resources for full participation, and self-direction. [ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR]

Repetto, J., Cavanaugh, C., Wayer, N., & Feng, L. (2010). Virtual high schools: Improving outcomes for students with disabilities. *Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, 11(2), 91-104. Retrieved from <http://www.infoagepub.com/>

Abstract: Individual and social benefits accrue when high school graduation rates increase. One approach to increasing graduation rates is to design learning environments that serve students with disabilities through the 5Cs known to increase school completion: connect, climate, control, curriculum, and caring community. Virtual school programs align with the 5Cs, as demonstrated by virtual schools that have closed achievement gaps and increased completion rates among students with disabilities. Key features of these programs are described, with the national standards for quality online teaching and courses exemplified by each. Strategies are offered for increasing success of students with disabilities in virtual schools. [ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR]

Rice, K., & Dawley, L. (2009). The status of professional development for k-12 online teachers: Insights and implications. *Journal of Technology & Teacher Education*, 17(4), 523-545.

Retrieved from <http://www.editlib.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048/jJTATE>

Abstract: The authors share findings, insights, and implications from "Going Virtual! The Status of Professional Development for K-12 Online Teachers," a 2007 report supported by the North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL, now known as iNACOL). The authors conducted a national survey of 259 K-12 online teachers, administrators, and professional development trainers to gain baseline information on the status of K-12 online teacher professional development. This article provides three main insights from the study: (a) the influence of evolving context on professional development; (b) the broad continuum of professional development practices and models; and (c) global and situation-specific professional development needs. It discusses implications for K-12 online teacher professional development practice, policy, and research. [ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR]

Smith, R. D. (2009). Virtual voices: Online teachers' perceptions of online teaching standards.

Journal of technology and teacher education 17(4), 547 – 571. Retrieved from

<http://www.editlib.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048/j/JTATE/v/17/n/4>

Abstract: Online teachers' perceptions of online teaching standards published in 2006 by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and the National Education Association (NEA).

Interviews with two teachers from each of the four online schools were studied following an online survey of 49 online teachers from these schools. Overall, participants reported that both sets of standards as being important but found the NEA standards to be slightly more relevant to their practice. The qualitative data, both interviews and open-ended questions on the survey, revealed these themes related to the national standards: concerns about the language of the standards; the standards' failure to acknowledge how much the roles of individual online teachers vary, depending on the school and course model; differentiation between online and face-to-face teaching; aspects of the standards participants endorsed; omissions participants perceived in the standards; participants' lack of awareness of the standards; and the importance of online teachers having experience as online learners. The paper concludes with recommendations for policy and research. (Contains 7 tables.)

Schulte, M. (2010). Faculty Perceptions of Technology Distance Education Transactions:

Qualitative Outcomes to Inform Teaching Practices. *Journal of Educators Online*, 7(2),

1-34. Retrieved from <http://www.thejeo.com/Archives/Volume7Number2>

[/Schultepaper.pdf](#)

Abstract: Understanding instructors' perceptions of distance education transactions is becoming increasingly important as the mode of distance learning has become not only accepted, but preferred by many students. A need for more empirical qualitative data was evident as anecdotal

information still dominates the research literature. The study focused on the faculty of an established distance learning program at a small Midwestern university. Qualitative interviews were gathered, coded and analyzed. Faculty who used technology in their distance education courses were targeted. Faculty perceptions on course context, students, interpersonal and procedural transactions, learning and teaching transactions, and assessment transactions were gathered. The qualitative analysis provided rich data to further inform distance education programs? administrative, technological, and andragogical needs. Recommendations for future study, including a model for transactional hierarchy, were proffered. [ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR]

Summary

There are five central themes presented in the literature as cited in the preceding section: effective online instructors 1.) utilize clear, timely communication, 2.) build a sense of caring community with their students, 3.) maintain high expectations with rigorous content, 4.) support student success through scaffolding, and 5.) coordinate knowledge of content, pedagogy, and technology. The researcher indicates that effective teachers regularly self-reflect to improve instruction, often have years of prior teaching experience in traditional classrooms, and often participate in training and professional development for online instruction.

In the area of training and professional development, research has indicated an increased need for teacher training and professional development specific to online instruction.

Researchers recommend that teacher preparation programs include additional technology integration in teacher preparation coursework and that virtual schools provide training and professional development to online instructors prior to the beginning of online teaching.

Furthermore, the evidence suggests that students contact teachers for required training to use

technology, yet teaching students how to use technology is often beyond the expertise of the virtual instructor.

Finally, many of the articles addressed the need for additional research of online faculty to determine best practices for online instruction. While the amount of research in the area of online instruction is growing, research has mainly focused on types of programs offered and comparisons between virtual school programs and traditional school programs. Researchers have worked to build qualitative data concerning teacher effectiveness characteristics, the role of professional development and training in the virtual school, and the impact of prior teaching experience on effective virtual instruction. In addition, the research has included experienced virtual teachers; however, most of the research focused on the high school and college or university level. Further study of effective online instructors would help build evidence to help current and future virtual teachers become more effective teachers by integrating pedagogy, content, and technology.