K-12 Blended and Online Competencies, Standards, Retention, and Attitudes

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This issue begins the fourth volume of the *Journal of Online Learning Research* (JOLR), and provides an opportunity to reflect on the first three years of the journal. The last three years have passed quickly, and we are pleased with the state of the journal. This is the tenth issue of JOLR which has included three special issues. Going into our fourth year, JOLR's current acceptance rate is 21.6%. JOLR also enjoys excellent review board members who provide detailed and helpful feedback to authors in a relatively short amount of time. As a new journal, we do not have a large article backlog, so articles can be published relatively quickly after acceptance.

Looking forward, we are especially excited about two upcoming special issues. The first special issue, *Online and Blended Learning for Diverse Learners*, is guest edited by Mary Rice, Mark Deschaine, and Daryl Mellard who are currently working with authors on finalizing their articles for publication this summer. The second special issue, *Instructional Design in K-12 Online and Blended Learning Environments*, is guest edited by Christopher P. Rozitis, Khendum Gyabak, and Krista Tomaselli, who will be accepting manuscripts for review until April 20, 2018.

In the current issue, we are excited to publish four articles. Two of the articles focus on teaching standards and competencies. Research that rigorously examines standards for online courses and teaching, or the competencies required to meet them, is surprisingly lacking. In this issue, Kevin Hell-

er specifically examined iNACOL's *National Standards for Quality Online Courses*. While the most current version of these standards was published eight years ago and has been adopted by schools, districts, and teacher preparation programs, Adelstein and Barbour (2016) previously pointed out that "there has been no research published that reports the validity of the standards or the published rubric that measures those standards" (p. 46). In Heller's article, published in this issue, he examined online teacher perceptions of each of the 52 standards. Based on teachers' survey rankings of the standards, Heller found that online teachers were more likely to endorse 15 standards that the University of California previously labeled "power standards" than the 37 non-power standards. However, when each standard's rankings were examined individually, some non-power standards were ranked higher than those designated as power standards. Heller recommended that the power standards be adapted accordingly.

Emily B. Pulham, Charles R. Graham, and Cecil R. Short reviewed existing K-12 blended and online teacher competencies to determine which of the competencies specifically focused on teaching in in-person environments, online environments, blended environments, or described generic skills that would apply to any teaching context. Their review found that the majority of existing online and blended teaching competencies are actually generic and recommend that competencies be developed that focus specifically on the intended mode of instruction. They argue that more specific standards will help professional development and teacher preparation programs to more efficiently and effectively target and model the required competencies. This research was also part of a larger research project that includes Pulham and Graham's (2018, accepted) article, *Comparing K-12 Online and Blended Teaching Competencies: A Literature Review*, that has been accepted for publication in *Distance Education* and will be of interest to the JOLR readership.

While online teacher preparation is important, it is equally essential to retain teachers once they have gained the required skills to teach online. Ingle M. Larkin, Anissa Lokey-Vega, and Laurie Brantley-Dias examined online teachers' turnover intentions. A logistic regression model using survey responses from 108 online teachers found schedule flexibility, mentoring, number of students, number of years teaching experience, and affective commitment were predictors of online teacher's likelihood of turnover. Interestingly, the conveniences and affordances of teaching online were highly predictive in online teacher retention, possibly indicating that teacher turnover may not be as serious a concern as it has proven to be in face-to-face teaching contexts. Findings from this study may also prove helpful for

school leaders when interviewing or onboarding teachers with little online teaching experience.

In the last article, Tian Luo and Alexander Murray examined middle school teachers' attitudes towards teaching and learning in a one-laptop-per-child (1:1) environment. While 1:1 environments are commonly implemented without meaningful blended or online learning, some models of blended learning require or are more easily implemented in 1:1 environments. As a result, understanding teachers' attitudes towards 1:1 environments can provide important insights to those interested in establishing blended learning initiatives in 1:1 environments. Using data collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and surveys at a single middle school, Luo and Murray found that teachers had mixed attitudes towards students' use of technology. While teachers saw how technology could make some learning activities more efficient, they also generally believed that students were unable to engage in self-directed learning activities. This perception could prove to be an important obstacle to blended and personalized learning.

We hope that as you read and reflect on these articles you gain insights that will prove helpful in your K-12 online and blended learning related efforts. We also hope that you consider JOLR as a potential publication outlet for your research.

References

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