

Responding to a Crisis and Planning for What is Ahead

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It is impossible to take inventory of all the ways the COVID-19 pandemic has already impacted our field, let alone predict what the future might hold. What is clear is that scholars in our field responded quickly to provide leadership to their universities and institutions as well as to K-12 schools and teachers throughout the world. While learning online was new for most students and teachers, we were able to draw upon decades of research and scholarship on K-12 online and blended learning to provide practical actionable guidance. The 2018 [*Handbook of Research on K-12 Online and Blended Learning*](#) (2nd Edition) edited by Kathryn Kennedy and Richard E. Ferdig, has been an especially helpful introduction to the field. Scholars have also made their voices heard in newspaper and magazine articles, online periodicals, blog posts, podcasts, and on social media.

While we have accumulated a large amount of online and blended learning research, many researchers have highlighted important differences between emergency remote learning and online learning, most notably by Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, and Bond (2020) whose article in *Educause Review* has been shared broadly and has already cited nearly 250 times according to Google Scholar at the time of this writing. Recognizing the immediate need for research on remote learning and teaching during the early phases of the pandemic, the Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education's (AACE) *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education* published a fast-tracked, open-access special issue [*Preservice and Inservice Professional Development During the COVID-19 Pandemic*](#) that included 33 short articles. In fact, there were so many submissions, a number of them

were published in the open-access book *Teaching, Technology, and Teacher Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Stories from the Field* (Ferdig, Baumgartner, Hartshorne, Kaplan-Rakowski, & Mouza, 2020). AACE has also organized the upcoming *SITE Interactive 2020 Conference* (October 26-28) that will be offered fully online and is distinct from the spring conference by placing a larger focus on teaching and mentoring.

In addition to AACE's other efforts, the *Journal of Online Learning Research* (JOLR) has the ability to make a meaningful impact during this time of crisis. JOLR has always been "devoted to the theoretical, empirical, and pragmatic understanding of technologies and their impact on pedagogy and policy in primary and secondary (K-12) online and blended environments." We are especially grateful for AACE's support in keeping the journal open-access so that practitioners can easily make use of its published research. While JOLR is a relatively new journal, its unique focus on K-12 online and blended learning has allowed it to publish more articles on the topic than any other journal over the last two decades (Arnesen, Hveem, Short, West, & Barbour, 2019). In this issue we are pleased to publish three articles.

In an especially timely article, "Keeping Our Schools Safe: Examining Perceptions of Crisis Frequency and Preparedness of Educators in a State-wide Online Charter School," Juliann Sergi McBrayer, Dawn Tysinger, Jeff Tysinger, Terry Diamanduros, Katherine Fallon examine teachers' preparedness at a statewide online charter school to detect and respond to crisis. Their analysis of 143 teacher survey responses found that the majority of teachers did not select "very prepared" when asked to indicate their preparedness to respond to neglect (45.8%), abuse (47.6%), homicidal ideations (18.9%), unexpected death of a student (9.8%), unexpected death of a teacher (7.7%), natural disasters (18.9%), or terrorist threat (7.7%). In fact, suicidal ideations was the only crisis where a majority of teachers (53.1%) indicated they were "very prepared" to respond. Dealing with COVID-19, wildfires, and other natural disasters, as well as the impact that these events can have on students' emotional and mental well-being, has only highlighted the need to be prepared to respond to crises at all levels. While teachers and administrators have been remarkably adaptable to the crises this year, it is clear that educational communities and teacher preparation programs need to better prepare teachers to recognize and respond to crises.

In their article "Successful Online Learning: What Does Learner Interaction with Peers, Instructors and Parents Look Like?", Whitney Keaton and Andrew Gilbert's article examined students' human interactions at a private full-time online high school. The 12 student interview participants shared that their teachers were readily available both synchronously and asynchronously whether or not students took advantage of those opportunities. Parents were also available to help, but sometimes failed to clearly understand their roles since they had little previous experience with online learning

themselves—a theme that has been highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite their inexperience, parents were able to offer several types of support including monitoring, motivating, instructing, and organizing. Students reported fewer opportunities to interact with peers compared to in-person settings. Students also tended to be satisfied with the amount of peer-to-peer interaction. Those who took advantage of extracurricular activities offered by the school also appreciated opportunities to interact socially with peers and found those interactions helpful in building connection and community.

One of the challenges to learning online is knowing how to learn online (Lowes & Lin, 2015). Compared to in-person courses, online courses tend to provide students with more flexibility in time, place, and pace of learning. This level of flexibility can be challenging for both students and their parents when creating and following learning schedules. In the third article of this issue, “Student Clickstream Data: Does Time of Day Matter?”, Gina M. Ricker, Mathew Koziarski, and Alyssa M. Walters analyzed analytic data for 414 11th-grade English students across two cyber schools. They found that students who were most active during morning hours tended to significantly outperform peers who were largely active during other times of the day. This result can provide guidance when helping students form a learning schedule and may encourage them to make better use of morning hours. At the same time, students who were most active in the morning also tended to be more active overall than other students, placing importance on increasing students’ overall time on task.

Interest in K-12 remote, online, and blended learning has never been higher, and we encourage new submissions to JOLR on related topics. We would like to thank all of the blind peer reviewers who made this issue possible. We know this has been a difficult, busy, and stressful year, so we have been especially appreciative of JOLR’s excellent reviewers. We would also like to thank our research community for such generous support over the years during our time as editors. It is with great gratitude that we announce a search for new editors for this fledgling journal. For those interested, please visit <https://site.aace.org/about/editor-call/>. We look forward to working with new leadership to ensure a smooth transition. We are excited to see JOLR continue to grow to reach new heights, expand widely, and share the important knowledge we have learned in order to improve online learning at the primary and secondary education levels.

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