Online Learning Environments: Instructional Design Considerations for Students with Learning Disabilities

Proposal Summary

Technology is an indispensable part of everyday life. As such, it also is an integral component of our educational system. Because online education is becoming more and more a part of technology-based instruction in special and general education, the design of online learning environments is integral to educational outcomes for students with learning disabilities. Research focusing on the instructional design of online instruction indicates that there are universal variables that must be incorporated for learning to occur (e.g., accessible text, typography, legibility, line length, alignment). However, there also are specific learning characteristics of the student that must be considered. Online learning for students with learning disabilities must take into consideration the specific learning characteristics that have been identified for this population. In a recent research project, Boone and Higgins (2005) identified 19 instructional design considerations to be incorporated into online instruction for students with learning disabilities. These range from built-in generalization to procedures for correction and evaluation.

This brief paper will discuss the design issues to consider when creating online instruction for students with learning disabilities. A checklist will be shared that allows the educator to consider the following design components: (a) instruction, (b) the directions and documentation, (c) feedback and evaluation, (d) content, (e) individualization options, (f) interface and screen design, and (g) accessibility. Design considerations will be discussed in two areas: (1) design that is applicable to all students with disabilities, and (2) specific design issues for students with learning disabilities.

Literature Review


Session Objectives

1.) Participants will learn to use an instructional design checklist when creating online learning for students with learning disabilities.
2.) Participants will be introduced to research-based instructional components that are appropriate for online instruction for students with disabilities.
3.) Participants will understand the importance instructional design in the creation of online learning for students with learning disabilities.

Learner Outcomes

As online education becomes an integral component in general and special education, educators must know how to modify online education to maximize the learning opportunities for students with learning disabilities. This brief paper will provide research-based instructional design considerations for use in the construction of online learning environments for this population of students.

Audience Participation

Design considerations will be discussed. The checklist will be presented and its use discussed. Participants will receive a copy of the design checklist.