



*Center on Online Learning
and Students with Disabilities*

Quarterly Report



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Center Overview

The Challenge

To date, online learning reaches millions of K-12 learners, with its continued growth inevitably leading to dramatic changes in the educational landscape. While online learning holds great promise, there is a paucity of research addressing the pedagogical implications for students with disabilities. Researchers urgently need to conduct investigations that demonstrate how online instruction should be designed and delivered to improve student outcomes.

The challenge of the Center is to address learner variability by conducting research to make online learning more accessible, engaging, and effective for students with disabilities, for whom traditional forms of education have been only moderately successful and the precipitous growth in online instruction threatens to exclude. To address these issues, the Center will assume a leadership role in conducting research and building a network of research collaborators representing a wide array of disciplines whose expertise impacts learner outcomes.

Our Mission

To research how online learning can be made more accessible, engaging, and effective for K-12 learners with disabilities by investigating approaches that address learner variability within the range of conditions under which online learning occurs.

Our Goals

- Identify and verify trends and issues related to the participation of students with disabilities in K-12 online learning in a range of forms and contexts (e.g., virtual schools, online courses, expository, interactive, etc.). Research topics will include accessibility and delivery of content, patterns of student participation, learning needs and supports, and emerging forms of online learning and their potential impact on accessibility and outcomes for students with disabilities.

- Identify and describe major potential positive outcomes and negative consequences of participation in online learning for students with disabilities, and analyze the available evidence on these outcomes and consequences. Positive outcomes may include a range of academic, social, career, and functional achievements associated with college- and career-readiness. Negative consequences may include reduced access to social or extra-curricular activities, a narrowed curriculum, a reduced alignment of instruction with academic standards, or the failure of instructional designs to be responsive to learner attributes.

- Identify and develop promising approaches for increasing the accessibility and potential effectiveness of online learning for students with disabilities. These approaches may involve designing accessibility and support features for online learning, providing supplementary off-line resources, individualizing online learning, identifying and addressing student learning problems as soon as possible, and training students, teachers, tutors, parents, and others involved in online learning on ways to support student learning.

- Test the feasibility, usability, and potential effectiveness (or promise) of one or more key approaches using appropriate research designs such as quasi-experimental, single-subject, qualitative, and experimental research. This research will involve actually trying the approach(es) with the intended populations in authentic settings. The research will produce detailed descriptions of the approaches and their key components, evidence that the approaches can be successfully implemented in authentic settings, and evidence of the promise of the approaches for achieving their intended outcomes for students with disabilities.

Our Activities

1. Carrying out high-quality research and development that will result in validated practices that inform the design and development of new approaches and innovations.

2. Establishing principles for the design, development, and validation of online instruction effective for all students, including K-12 learners with disabilities, via the application of learning analytics that take advantage of the inherent capabilities of online learning technologies to provide faster, more accurate, more informative assessment and progress monitoring, and impact learner outcomes.

3. Highlighting and amplifying existing resources that have been validated as promising and developing new online learning solutions that support K-12 learners with disabilities.

4. Developing a dynamic network of online learning stakeholders including but not limited to education agencies, business and industry, innovators, researchers, and parents for the purposes of validating and implementing online learning solutions that are appropriate and effective for K-12 learners with disabilities.

5. Informing stakeholders (SEAs, LEAs, developers, and others) on how to identify and implement high-quality online learning solutions that are effective for K-12 learners with disabilities.

6. Disseminating research findings and evidence-based principles for guiding the design, development, and use of online learning resources that address the needs of K-12 learners with disabilities.

July 2015

Major Activities and Accomplishments

RESEARCH STUDIES

STUDY: Social Skills

- Draft of study summary for inclusion in Center's Annual Publication (Equity Matters) completed.

STUDY: MW1

- Met with district leadership to establish plans for 2015-2016 school year.
- Worked on write-ups for inclusion in Center's Annual Publication (Equity Matters).
- Submitted overviews for chapter publications.

STUDY: MI2

- Worked on write-ups for inclusion in Center's Annual Publication (Equity Matters).
- Worked on submissions for publication and presentation.
- Continued data analysis.

STUDY: Audio-Supported Reading (ASR) - TextHelp

- Research team worked on programming strategies to merge and analyze the data sets from the spring to try out with a smaller set of classrooms in Westwood school district.

STUDY: Discipline-Specific Graphic Organizers (DSGOs)

- Worked on two drafts, one for an article and one for the Center's Annual Publication (Equity Matters). Incorporated the data analyzed in June.
- Received word that this study was accepted for presentation at Closing the Gap conference in October.

STUDY: Stakeholder Forums

- Forum #1 - State Education Agencies
 - Completed Topic 4 report and posted to Center's website. All topical reports for this forum have now been completed and posted online.
- Forum #2 - Superintendents
 - Worked on developing descriptors of the forum participants for inclusion in the topical reports.
 - Continued revisions of Topic 1, 5, and 6 reports.
- Forum #3 - Vendors
 - Continued refinement of the agenda
 - Center staff reworked the issue questions aligned with each of the topics.

STUDY: HECSE Survey (Teacher Education)

- Researcher worked on a draft summary for the Center's Annual Publication based on existing data analysis.

STUDY: Vocabulary

- Researchers have completed additional work on establishing the appropriate filters in our programming tool Python to select the correct vocabulary oriented support usage in each of the two CAST tools in this retrospective study.
- All demographic data has been entered for both programs.
- All outcomes performance data has been accessed and entered.
- All opportunity for vocabulary usage for Project Monitor/Strategic Reader has been accessed and entered into Python as a variable.

EXTERNAL RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

VENDOR: EdTech

- Researchers continued working on report drafts.

VENDOR: Project Inspiration

- Researchers completed preliminary data analysis of achievement and motivation scores, looking at school building, disability status, and gender status differences.

VENDOR: LearningCo

- Continued review and revisions of draft summarizing findings from data collected prior to halt of study activities.

OUTPUT

CONFERENCES/PRESENTATIONS

- Center researchers conducted two sessions at the ISTE 2015 Conference & Expo:
 - What Works in Supporting All Students in Blended and Personalized Learning? (Panel Sessions)
 - Student Success in the Blended Learning Environment: Tips and Tricks (Poster Session)

PUBLICATIONS

- The Center posted three more State Education Agency Forum reports on its website:
 - State Education Agency Forum Report 4: Using, Sharing and Integrating Student Response Data from the Online Environment
 - State Education Agency Forum Report 7: Utilization of the Online Environment's Unique Properties
 - State Education Agency Forum Report 8: Differential Access to Online Learning Within and Across Districts
- Equity Matters: Digital and Online Learning for Students with Disabilities (Center Annual Publication)
 - Neared completion of initial state policy scan and sent the first eight completed state summaries to State Directors of Education for review and feedback.
 - Worked with graphic designer to determine overall look of publication.
 - Researchers continued work on chapter drafts.

August 2015

Major Activities and Accomplishments

RESEARCH STUDIES

STUDY: Social Skills

- Continued work on manuscript and summary draft for Center's Annual Publication.

STUDY: MW1

- The research team met with district personnel to discuss how our project would continue in the 2015-2016 school year. These meetings included district leadership and school administrators. The result of these meetings was to continue the Center's project in MW1 with one school opting to expand the number of teachers participating in the project.
- The research team created and refined tools to implement in blended learning classrooms. These tools center on capturing data on student self-regulation in the blended learning environment.

STUDY: MI2

- Completed outline of MI2 Phases I & II for ICI Global Book Chapter.
- Created data analysis templates for MI2 full district data summary; HS Self-Regulation intervention (completed March - June 2015) & MS intervention cycle (April - May 2015).
- Drafted MI2/Personalization vignette & summary for Center's Annual Publication.

STUDY: Audio-Supported Reading (ASR) – TextHelp

- TextHelp, Westwood Schools and Center researchers have been reviewing the data collected to determine if we have all the necessary matches and measures. This task was complicated by the summer vacation time and start up to the school year.

STUDY: UDL Scan Tool

- Continued work on draft of UDL report and the UDL Scan Tool manual, as well as preparations for posting the UDL Scan Tool itself on the website.

STUDY: Discipline-Specific Graphic Organizers (DSGOs)

- Completed the first draft of manuscript.

STUDY: Stakeholder Forums

- Forum #1 - State Directors of Special Education
 - Received a corrected description of one participant, and updated the reports accordingly. Posted the corrected reports on the website. Work on this forum is now complete.
- Forum #2 - Superintendents
 - Continued editing of Topic 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 reports.
 - Reports for all topics have now been drafted.
 - Staged the reports for distribution to participants and OSEP staff for their edits.
- Forum #3 - Vendors
 - Completed final preparations for the forum including: edits to the agenda and topical questions; conference call to discuss the process for the forum; drafted a table to help with note-taking at the forum; and prepared presentation materials for use at the forum.
 - All seven invited participants attended the forum (representing six organizations).
 - Edited the summary table of the participants' comments and distributed to participants for review and feedback.
 - Initial drafting of topical reports began.

STUDY: Vocabulary

- New data sets of opportunity for vocabulary usage were created for the ICON materials.
- Eight books were reviewed for (a) vocabulary supports available, (b) location in the text, and (c) types of supports (images, text, contextual use of term, etc.).
- Additional filters were created in the Python program to analyze usage.
- Began search for event usage logs for the ICON 3 data sets.

EXTERNAL RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

VENDOR: EdTech

- Third revision of NE1 research report submitted internally and to OSEP for commentary & review; awaiting feedback.

VENDOR: Project Inspiration

- Draft of the report was completed and shared internally for editing.
- Analysis of student data is complete.
- Began preparations for analysis of teacher responses on the online survey.

VENDOR: LearningCo

- Continued review and revisions of draft summarizing findings from data collected prior to halt of study activities.

OUTPUT

PUBLICATIONS

- Equity Matters: Digital and Online Learning for Students with Disabilities (Center Annual Publication)
 - Continued writing drafts of Chapters 3-5.
 - Sent Chapters 3 and 4 to OSEP for review and feedback.
 - Distributed nearly all of the state and territory scan summaries to SEA staff for review and feedback. Only four states/territories still awaiting completion and distribution.

September 2015

Major Activities and Accomplishments

RESEARCH STUDIES

STUDY: Social Skills

- Continued work on manuscript. Worked on solidifying the methods section and the introduction.
- Met with research methodologist to discuss completion of the data analysis. Discussed the initial findings and considered the results across the three groups of students.
- Finalized summary of this work for the Annual Publication.

STUDY: MW1

- Met with district leadership team to discuss progress. Met with school teams to follow-up on August activities. Supported teams at district training session. Weekly meetings with teachers. Designed forethought tool with teachers. Conducted school observations.

STUDY: MI2

- Drafted MI2 descriptive research book chapter for Handbook of Research on Classroom Diversity and Inclusive Education Practice.
- Drafted article for Journal of Special Education Technology (JSET)
- Drafted article for Journal of Special Education Leadership (JSEL)
- Collated all MI2 datasets for synthesis

STUDY: Audio-Supported Reading (ASR) – TextHelp

- Discussion with Westwood regarding use of Read and Write for Google (R&W4G) - currently on slow down. District purchased new Chromebooks and they want to get them prepared, installed, and tested in each school before starting use of R&W4G.
- Continued work with TextHelp on their Teacher Survey work - input on questions, sequence and follow up for this academic year.

STUDY: Discipline-Specific Graphic Organizers (DSGOs)

- Completed an initial draft of the manuscript as well as a modified version for chapter 4 of the Annual Publication.

STUDY: Stakeholder Forums

- Forum #2 - Superintendents
 - Completed edits for Topic 8 and 10 reports.
 - Reworked edits to multiple topical reports in advance of distributing to OSEP, NASDSE and the participants.
 - Posted Topic 5 report on Center's website.
- Forum #3 - Vendors
 - Completed Topic 1 report draft in preparation for distribution to participants and OSEP for review and feedback.

STUDY: UDL Scan Tool

- Reviewed current draft of the UDL report, which consists of an introduction, a vendor overview, and a summarization of the findings for each of the 6 vendors. Continued editing, re-drafting, and writing the introduction section, and worked with primary copyeditor to offer feedback and revisions.
- Contracted with a graphic designer to help with the design for the Universal Design for Learning Report. Met to discuss intended design of the UDL report, and to provide him directions for developing the first draft template.
- Developed timeline for completion, with tentative goal of having the final publication made available via the web by October.

STUDY: Vocabulary

- Researchers prepared data sets for statistician. Worked on matching of student identifiers with computer code identifiers and testing.

STUDY: SEVS

- This new line of research will investigate the impact of blended learning on the educational outcomes of students with disabilities enrolled in a statewide occupational course of study program (SEVS).
- Center researchers conducted Initial meetings with SEVS to discuss possible research questions and define parameters of the study.
- Focusing on two research questions (out of five initially considered), researchers developed a conceptual map of the two elements of the study, which was then reviewed internally and revised.
- Resumed discussions with SEVS after the beginning of the school year and shared a draft outlining the two elements of the study.

EXTERNAL RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

VENDOR: EdTech

- Continued revision of report drafts.

VENDOR: Project Inspiration

- Center researchers continued discussions with Project Inspiration staff regarding the appropriate variables for assessing students' participation in the Project Inspiration materials and how to calculate those values. Also discussed plans for district presentation.
- Worked on draft of the summary report in light of aforementioned discussions.
- Began reworking the analysis in light of students' completion of the curriculum; deleted cases (n = 2) who had completed less than 10 of the curricular activities.

VENDOR: LearningCo

- Continued review and revisions of draft summarizing findings from data collected prior to halt of study activities.

OUTPUT

PUBLICATIONS

- Center staff worked with the Journal of Special Education Leadership (JSEL) to plan for a special issue in 2016.
- The Center posted "Superintendent Forum Report 5: Access and Coordination of Related Services" on its website.
- Equity Matters: Digital and Online Learning for Students with Disabilities (Center Annual Publication)
 - Continued collection and reconciliation of state feedback on state policy scans for chapter 2. As of 9/25, responses were received from 35 states/territories.
 - Submitted drafts of chapters 3, 4, and 5 to OSEP.
 - Began rewrites of chapters based on OSEP feedback.