



*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.

October 2015

Major Activities and Accomplishments

RESEARCH STUDIES

STUDY: MW1

- The research team met with district leadership team to discuss progress, with school teams to follow-up on September activities, and continued weekly meetings with teachers. Implemented forethought tool in classrooms. Conducted school observations.

STUDY: MI2

- The research team continued work on the student self-regulation (S-R)/Grit analysis and report write-up.
- Established iPython server for shared data access
- Submitted descriptive research book chapter for Handbook of Research on Classroom Diversity and Inclusive Education Practice
- Continue drafts of articles for JSET & JSEL

STUDY: Audio-Supported Reading (ASR) - TextHelp

- Researchers continued literature reviews on reading supports, text-to-speech, students with disabilities, teacher materials, training, etc.
- The research team met with Westwood administration to discuss startup of R&W4G in the district. All Chromebooks reported to be in place and in working order with good internet bandwidth to support multiple classroom use of R&W4G. Some discussion and concern was expressed about some teachers being less familiar with the tool and how to make use of it in their classrooms. Researchers shared website information, training modules made by TextHelp, etc. for such purposes. Reviewed the demographic information needs and resent the spreadsheet for this data collection.

STUDY: Discipline-Specific Graphic Organizers (DSGOs)

- Work on manuscript was continued.

STUDY: Stakeholder Forums

- Forum #2 - Superintendents
 - Distributed drafts to participants for comments, and reviewed feedback.
 - Worked on drafts of topic 2 and 7 reports.
 - Reposted updated Topic 5 report.
 - Posted Topic 1 and 6 reports on Center's website.
- Forum #3 - Vendors
 - Continued writing and revision of Topic 1 and 2 reports.

STUDY: Vocabulary

- Researchers worked on cleaning Strategic Reader data event usage sets - permissioned students, complete data sets, demographics, etc. Setting and testing filters for specific click behaviors in the data sets to include.

STUDY: UDL Scan Tool

- Continued work on draft of report.
- Worked with graphic artist to develop graphic representation of data and to refine the plan for the report's layout.
- Determined that the report would not be finished by the initial target date and thus, worked with the team to reevaluate the completion timeline.

STUDY: SEVS

- Met with primary SEVS contact to discuss the two proposals developed including a survey instrument.
- Reviewed initial data provided by SEVS including organization of some of this data, pursuing information to clarify the data they have, and sorting out further questions for clarity.
- Conducted further review of the SEVS program to determine the critical elements of the study.

EXTERNAL RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

VENDOR: EdTech

- Research team compiled all existing assets to determine article write up potential.

VENDOR: Project Inspiration

- Researchers conducted further analysis and continued working on the report draft, including reconstruction of tables and figures.
- The Center research team met with Project Inspiration staff regarding report recommendations and planning of materials for the district presentation. Added text about the differences of ELA and Project Inspiration implementation among the schools.
- Continued work on outline for journal article and preparing a summary table of the statistical results; work on the interpretation of the 3-way interactions and 2-way interaction.

VENDOR: LearningCo

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

OUTPUT

CONFERENCES/PRESENTATIONS

- Center staff began preliminary planning for a Technical Work Group meeting in December, including contact with current TWG members, and phone calls with two potential new members.

PUBLICATIONS

- The Center published a blog post titled "State and School Leaders Talk About Learning Online" on its website.
- The Center posted two new Superintendent Forum reports on its website:
 - Superintendent Forum Report 1: Enrollment, Persistence, Progress, and Achievement
 - Superintendent Forum Report 6: Using, Sharing, Integration, and Instructional Usage of Student Response Data among all Parties Involved in Online Learning
- Equity Matters: Digital and Online Learning for Students with Disabilities (Center Annual Publication)
 - Finalized collection and reconciliation of state responses of scan for chapter 2. Completed data analysis of responses, writing of chapter two, and individual write-ups for each state.
 - Revised four new sections: SEA, LEA, Teacher & Parents. Sent to OSEP for review.
 - Final reviews/revisions of all chapters completed, and content shared with graphic designer for final layout.

November 2015

Major Activities and Accomplishments

RESEARCH STUDIES

STUDY: MW1

- The Center research team met with district leadership to discuss progress, with school teams to follow-up on October activities, and continued weekly meetings with teachers. Supported teams at district training session; gathered feedback from teachers for anticipated barriers and expected outcomes. Received feedback on forethought tool and adjusted the tool for the classroom. Conducted school observations.

STUDY: MI2

- The research team continued work on the S-R/Grit analysis.
- Preliminary report write-up completed.
- Submitted JSET article for review.

STUDY: Audio-Supported Reading (ASR) - TextHelp

- Center researchers met with TextHelp to discuss data and survey research they are doing, sharing and discussion about teacher needs and future modules TextHelp may develop to support instructional opportunities using R&W4G.
- Continued data collection, monitoring by TextHelp. No reports of challenges at this point.

STUDY: Discipline-Specific Graphic Organizers (DSGOs)

- Continued writing manuscript.

STUDY: Stakeholder Forums

- Forum #2 - Superintendents
 - Posted topic 2, 3, 4 and 7 reports on COLSD website.
 - Drafts for all topical reports have now been completed.
 - Continued editing of Topic 8, 9, and 10 reports.
- Forum #3 - Vendors
 - Continued writing and revisions of Topic 2, 3, and 4 reports.
 - Topic 2 report sent out for participant and OSEP review.
 - Drafts completed for Topic 4, 5, 6, and 7 reports.

STUDY: Vocabulary

- Researchers continued search for coding structure on Icon project and event usage log for third of three studies conducted in this project - recovery from archive servers.

STUDY: UDL Scan Tool

- Continued writing and revision of report and materials to accompany the online tool.

STUDY: SEVS

- Continued refinement of survey instrument.
- Drafted IRB application materials.

EXTERNAL RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

VENDOR: EdTech

- Data Incongruity article “Disconnected Data: The Challenge of Matching Activities to Outcomes for Students with Disabilities in Online Learning” was drafted, edited and submitted to the Journal of Special Education Technology (JSET).

VENDOR: Project Inspiration

- Researchers made final preparations for the presentation to participating school district and report submissions.

VENDOR: LearningCo

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

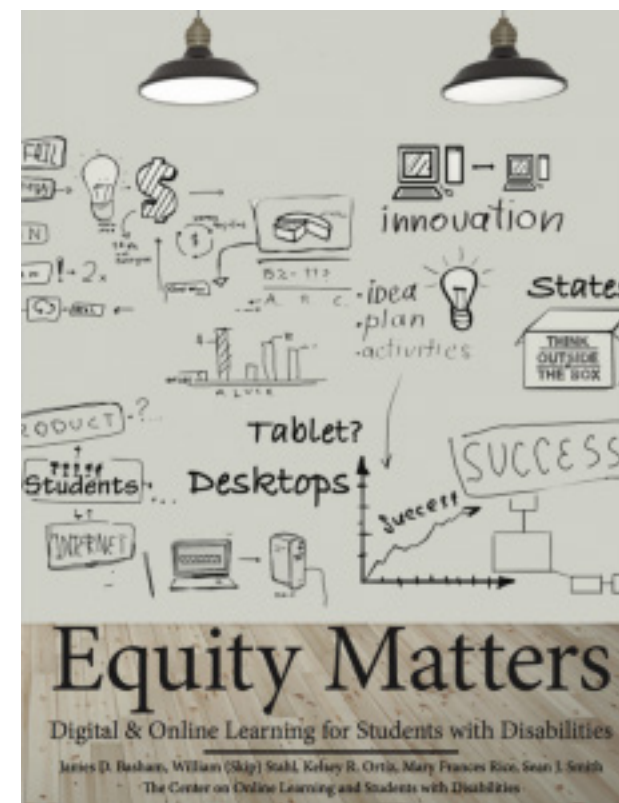
OUTPUT

CONFERENCES/PRESENTATIONS

- Center researchers conducted two sessions at the 2015 iNACOL Blended and Online Learning Symposium:
 - Interactive Q & A: Center on Online Learning and Students with Disabilities (Official Release of the Center’s Annual Publication: “Equity Matters: Digital and Online Learning for Students with Disabilities”)
 - Update on Online Learning & Students with Disabilities: Practitioner Perspectives, Research Results, and the Legal Landscape
- Center staff finalized preparation of agenda and materials for the Technical Work Group meeting on December 3.

PUBLICATIONS

- The Center posted five new reports from the Superintendent and Vendor Forums on its website:
 - Superintendent Forum Report 2: Parent Preparation and Involvement
 - Superintendent Forum Report 3: IDEA Principles in the Online Environment: Free Appropriate Public Education, Least Restrictive Environment, and Due Process Issues
 - Superintendent Forum Report 4: IDEA Principles in the Online Environment: IEP and Eligibility
 - Superintendent Forum Report 7: Teacher Preparation and Promising Practices in Online Learning
 - Vendor Forum Report 1: Enrollment, persistence, progress, and achievement for students with disabilities



Equity Matters: Digital and Online Learning for Students with Disabilities

- The Center formally released the inaugural issue of its new annual publication “Equity Matters” during a Q&A session at iNACOL 2015 in Orlando on 11/10/15.
- “Equity Matters” was published on the Center’s website, along with a blog post announcing the release.

This publication presents some preliminary understandings from a number of Center research projects and experiences to inform the various stakeholder groups of the emerging trends, outcomes, challenges, and promising practices in this developing field of practice. Special education was founded on, and continues to operate as, a collaboration among students with disabilities, families, professionals, and policymakers. In addition, the digital education industry’s growing, major influence in this realm of education makes collaboration with this sector critical. The overall goal of this publication is to spark discussion, reflection, and debate, with a focus on enhancing understanding within all participant groups, leading to the design of more responsive systems, practices, and policy to support enhanced outcomes for all learners—especially students with disabilities.

December 2015

Major Activities and Accomplishments

RESEARCH STUDIES

STUDY: MW1

- The research team met with district leadership team to discuss progress and establish plans for larger roll-out of self-regulation tools. Met with school teams to follow-up on November activities, and continued weekly meetings with teachers. Discussed and established a data plan for Winter and Spring of 2016.

STUDY: MI2

- Book chapter for the Handbook of Research on Classroom Diversity and Inclusive Education Practice accepted for publication; out for peer review.
- Continued drafting of JSEL article.
- Met to discuss preliminary GRIT/S-R finding from data analysis

STUDY: Audio-Supported Reading (ASR) - TextHelp

- The research team met with school contact - very little use of the tool anticipated in December after the 10th due to end of grading period work, assessments and holidays.

STUDY: Stakeholder Forums

- Forum #2 - Superintendents
 - Completed edits and posting of remaining topical reports.
 - All superintendent forum topical reports are now posted on website. Work on this forum is complete.
- Forum #3 - Vendors
 - All remaining topical reports drafts completed and distributed for participant and OSEP reviews.
 - Topic 1 and 3 reports were posted to the website.

STUDY: UDL Scan Tool

- The Center team worked to finalize the report content and preparations for publishing the online tool, including:
 - Draft of a blog post announcing the launch of the tool and report for the Center's website.
 - Completion of explanatory text for the report's web page.
 - Transfer of the tool from Qualtrics (the original medium) to a publicly-available Google form.
 - Development of a series of videos to explain how to use the tool.
 - Development of an Excel document for practitioners' use to analyze the data they collect from the UDL Scan Tool.
 - Finalizing report graphic design elements and layout.

STUDY: SEVS

- IRB applications for the two studies submitted for approval.

EXTERNAL RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

VENDOR: EdTech

- Article #2 "Student Data Privacy and its Impact on Education Research" drafted.

VENDOR: Project Inspiration

- The research team presented study findings to school district staff, and submitted the report to the vendor and school district.
- Worked on outline and draft of JSET article submission.

VENDOR: LearningCo

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

OUTPUT

CONFERENCES/PRESENTATIONS

- The Center hosted a Technical Work Group meeting on December 3.
- The Center received notification that its Strand proposal "Exploring Elementary and Secondary Blended/Online Learning for Students with Disabilities" was accepted for the CEC 2016 Special Education Convention & Expo.

PUBLICATIONS

- Descriptive research book chapter for Handbook of Research on Classroom Diversity and Inclusive Education Practice accepted for publication.
- The Center's article "When We Talk About Compliance, It's Because We Lived It" - Online Educators' Roles in Supporting Students with Disabilities" was published in the Online Learning Journal.
- Equity Matters: Digital and Online Learning for Students with Disabilities (Center Annual Publication)
 - Began transfer of each full-length state scan document to an accessible PDF format for posting on the Center website.
 - Revised the Equity Matters launch page on Center web site to accommodate all state scan documents.
 - The University of Kansas issued a PR piece on Equity Matters (<https://news.ku.edu/2015/11/17/ku-researchers-co-author-extensive-examination-online-learning-students-disabilities>).