

Introduction to the Spotlight Issue: The Educational Technology Program at the California State University, Fullerton

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Teachers as Educational Technology Leaders

The focus of this spotlight issue is the Educational Technology graduate program we co-direct in the Department of Elementary and Bilingual Education at the California State University, Fullerton (CSUF). CSUF is one of 23 campuses that make up the California State University System, which serves 437,000 students. CSU Fullerton is an urban commuter campus located in Southern California. The University had 37,000 enrolled students in the Fall 2012 Semester. The University offers 55 undergraduate degrees and 52 graduate degrees—including a doctorate in education and doctor of nursing practice.

Our program is offered completely online. Students take 30 semester credits—10 courses—offered over a 16-month period. We operate on a cohort model where the same 20-25 students stay together for the duration of the program. Students take six three-credit educational technology courses that are a mixture of theory and practice. The courses are designed to help teachers make informed decisions about the integration of technology into the classroom to improve teaching and learning. Our entire program is focused on the concept of technology being used in student-centered ways to help engage students and support their learning. In addition to the six educational technology courses, our students take four additional courses that all graduate students in our Department take. These three-credit courses are foundations of educational research, curriculum theory and development, learning theory, and a capstone project course.

An overarching goal of our program is to help classroom teachers become educational technology leaders in their school and district. We push our students to become actively involved in bringing about change in their school regarding the use of educational technology. Many of our former students have taken up this challenge not only by being involved as educational technology leaders in their schools but also by working at the district or county office level, by becoming actively involved in state and national educational technology organizations, and by being involved in providing professional development and training to teachers throughout the United States. This issue highlights our former graduate students—all current or former K-12 teachers—who have gone on to become educational technology leaders in various contexts.

Spotlight Issue Organization

We have included six articles written by graduates of the Educational Technology Program at CSUF. In the articles, our former graduate students share the work that they are doing in the classroom or in support of teachers. We start the issue with an article written by Dr. Jake Enfield, an Assistant Professor of New Media at California State University, Northridge. Dr. Enfield is a recent graduate of the Instructional Systems Technology program at Indiana University. His article examines the impact of using a flipped classroom model of instruction in an undergraduate multimedia course. His article suggests that the approach provided an engaging learning experience for students, was effective in helping students learn the content, and increased self-efficacy in

their ability to learn independently. He shares challenges—and the potential solutions to these challenges—of using a flipped classroom model.

Dr. Christine Olmstead, a former teacher and elementary school principal, wrote the second article you will find in the issue. She is now the Administrator of Academic Content for the Orange County Department of Education. Dr. Olmstead's article is based on a study she conducted to determine whether emerging technologies facilitate better parent-teacher communication and parent involvement. The results of her study indicate that active use of technologies by school personnel can help facilitate better parent-teacher communication, which can lead to increased levels of parent involvement in schools. Parent involvement in schools has been shown to have a positive relationship to student achievement.

Articles three and four are collaborative efforts we have been involved in with our graduate students. Both articles are classroom based studies that focus on the use of technology to impact student learning. The article by Catherine Cabiness—a junior high social studies teacher and part time online professional developer for Orange County Department of Education—is a case study that examined the benefits of integrating wikis into the World History curriculum. Findings from this study indicate that students, when given the option, chose to use higher order thinking skills when responding on the wiki. The data indicated that wikis help foster

collaborative learning, interaction, and natural student inquiry. The article by Brenda Boeglin-Quintana was conducted in a Kindergarten classroom to examine the impact of providing students with audio books via an iPod Shuffle during silent reading time at school. Results from the study show that there was no impact of using the iPod Shuffle on reading fluency; however, students exhibited greater motivation to read, greater engagement in the process, and sustained interest in stories “read.” The benefits to student self-esteem and study skills warrant the use of this strategy for students who may not have opportunities to be read to by a fluent reader on a consistent basis.

The final two articles are cases that describe the use of technology in the classroom. Cory Robertson, a teacher on special assignment in educational technology and assessment, describes how his district is using a cloud-based computing environment to support teachers in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Dana Encheff, a district technology specialist and part time professional developer for Orange County Department of Education, shares how he and his former 5th grade students engaged in a project that resulted in the creation of an e-book on science.

We appreciate being able to share our program and to highlight the work of our former graduate students who are effectively using educational technology in student-centered ways to support teaching and learning.

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