

# Chapter 10

## Preparing Future Teachers for the Challenges of the Digital Learner: A College Dilemma, Face-to- Face vs. Online or Both?

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### **ABSTRACT**

*With the recent pandemic, a rapid shift from traditional classroom learning to online learning has educators scrambling for resources, tips, and training tools to make the transition as smooth as possible for all involved. Traditional classroom teachers have been trained on various teaching strategies and how to apply teaching excellence standards to their physical classrooms. However, the training often falls short when transferring these same strategies and standards to online learning. This chapter aims to expand upon the work of Chickering and Gamson to provide those resources necessary to promote this transfer of skills. The application of prior research, along with some practical suggestions, will help K–12 educators, administrators, and educator preparation programs (EPPs) apply these standards of teaching excellence to virtual environments.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In the past, online learning was a conscious choice made by the student or their parents after weighing various options and concluding that it was more beneficial, more convenient, or more conducive to increasing learning for that particular student at that particular time. Often relegated to higher education or as a rare and often substandard alternative (Gomez-Rey et al., 2016) to K–12 education in Internet-capable geographic areas, it was perceived as new and trendy. Today, online learning is no longer a new or trendy way to engage in academic endeavors. Instead, online learning has become the norm regardless of age or geographic location. As such, educator preparation programs as well as existing K-12 professional development programs must stop treating it as a substandard alternative deserving minimal classroom attention. Instead, online learning theory and pedagogical models and standards of practice must be woven in and through the entire curriculum of these programs.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, online learning represented an upheaval of the traditional learning environment. Not only did this pivot to online learning affect the students, but also the educators found themselves desperate to navigate unknown and often disrupting territory. Even administrators found themselves lost in how to assist their teachers in providing effective instruction. With that in mind, it is imperative that this initiative to further educate our pre-service teachers in online learning theory be extended to our in-service teachers and administrators as well through carefully planned professional development activities.

As such, the use of the widely accepted standards of practice such as Chickering and Gamson's *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education* (1987) in our Educator Preparation Programs (EPP) for more than 30 years is being actively revisited with regard to online learning. These principles include: (a) encourages contact between students and faculty; (b) develops reciprocity and cooperation among students; (c) uses active learning techniques; (d) gives prompt feedback; (e) emphasizes time on task; (f) communicates high expectations; (g) respects diverse talents and ways of learning. Our role as we prepare future educators and provide professional development to our current educators is to marry these widely accepted principles of effectiveness with the fundamental aspects of online learning in such a way that a shift of modality is no longer an upheaval but rather a seamless transference of skills.

The purpose of this chapter is to expand upon the previous work of Chickering and Gamson to include what we have discovered about learning environments and instructional practices within the K–12 field of education. We identify significant updates and elaborate on how they may be applied in our changing education systems. Specifically, we include (a) an expansion of the original seven principles to be applied to the K–12 classroom, (b) the inclusion of online learning environments within the K–12 classroom, and (c) specific competencies and instructional practices, guided by the seven principles of quality instruction, that effective educators may include in an online learning environment. Finally, a checklist of *look-fors* is included for administrators and EPPs to use as a rubric for distinguishing effective practices within the online classroom.

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