

## Chapter 4

# Choosing Culturally, Linguistically, and Cognitively Distance Learning Platforms: Correlations Across Early Childhood Professional Standards to Promote Inclusion

**Rachel E. Terlop**

*George Mason University, USA*

**James Vargas-Ewing**

*New York City Public Schools, USA*

### **ABSTRACT**

*Upon completion of their educator preparation program, a study done by Archambault found that teachers felt most prepared in the areas of pedagogy, content, and pedagogical content. However, the same teachers reported feeling least prepared in the areas of technology and technology integration. With instruction shifting to an online space during COVID-19, the consideration of how to teach virtually was no longer abstract. This chapter highlights the journey of a teacher working to find supportive technology for their class, evaluating existing resources, connecting the tools to teaching standards, and ensuring platforms are inclusive and relevant for the culturally, linguistically, and cognitively diverse (CLCD) learners who utilize augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices. This chapter is rooted in early childhood education, social constructivism, and disability critical race theory (DisCrit) and seeks to serve as a critical guide, or model, for intentional and inclusive educators, researchers, practitioners, and learners.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Upon completion of their educator preparation program, a study done by Archambault (2011) found that teachers felt most prepared in the areas of subject-based content and pedagogical content knowledge. However, the same teachers reported feeling least prepared in the areas of technology and technology integration (Archambault, 2011). Articulating personal strengths and areas for growth shows evidence of a reflective practice. To support the ever expanding literature base in education research, districts offer professional development to ensure teachers are up-to-date on best practices. Oftentimes, districts issue mandatory professional development in addition to embedding participation in professional learning communities within district requirements for employment. The Archambault (2011) study emphasizes that identifying areas for growth and development can benefit educators, but only when there is time provided for self-directed learning and professional development based on choice or personal need.

When the instructional practices shifted during the COVID-19 pandemic, the space of grappling of how to teach online in the abstract was no longer optional. Teachers who still felt uncomfortable integrating or utilizing technology were no longer able to avoid learning. While educators of all ages were scrambling to digitize instruction and navigate a new classroom reality, student teachers were pushed as well. Student teachers were impacted because they were required to begin building an additional toolbox for themselves if they did not already have experience participating in, or leading online instruction. A forced outcome for the teachers-in-training who had their student teaching placement in the time of COVID-19, is the opportunity to get their 'toes wet' in the digital world of education. They entered the field with valuable experience that came from forced, traumatic, on-demand training. For any educator that is navigating online instructional spaces, this chapter serves as a navigational tool for exploring the newest educational frontier.

As an idealist interested in qualitative research, Social Constructivism, and Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit) in education, the ability to communicate is the most important part of the human experience. This became more apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic while the author was teaching first grade via Google Classroom to students who primarily spoke a language other than English, at home. The challenge to communicate with students, families, and colleagues was impeded in a new way due to varying levels of access and understanding of current technology. The experiences students have at school are captured in their drawings, their conversations, their work samples, and their notes. If technology use was not already part of daily routine, moving to virtual learning during the pandemic removed a great deal of ability to capture understanding, share thinking, and learn from one another. For students who communicate non-verbally, the inability to approach or utilize proximity with a teacher to request or show created an immense barrier to communication and instruction.

Human experiences preserved, beheld, spoken, heard, and written down are what our world is designed around. The sharing of experience is what allows everyone to feel seen, heard, and validated. Ancient texts and images are studied to derive meaning for today, so society can create again, tomorrow. All humans are a part of and contribute to the collective narrative, and this chapter seeks to showcase the impact intentionality can make for culturally, linguistically, and cognitively diverse learners who are working to communicate with or without their voice.

In this chapter focused primarily on Early Childhood Education, the social constructivist theory and DisCrit theory are outlined with the intent of providing a unique lens for those interested in transforming teachers' online pedagogical reasoning for teaching K-12 students in a virtual learning environment. The author created the standards for teaching and learning tables compiled in the chapter, from a variety of

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