Statement of Purpose

Online learning opportunities and enrollments have surged upward in the past 10 years and continue to rise. In 2010, over 4 million K-12 students participated in a formal online learning program and it is projected that by 2019 close to 50% of courses will be delivered online ("Fast facts about," 2011). These projections indicate the urgency for educational employers and universities to prepare existing and pre-service teachers to create, organize, evaluate, and manage online course content.

As educators in contemporary society, we are beginning to shift instructional practice within the classroom to address our Digital-Age audience. We must also be willing to address that same audience with online content. Society enjoys the accessibility of information on any topic at any time. Need a recipe? An oil change? References for a contractor? Medical advice? You can find the answers online. Many traditional districts have identified the need to make online content accessible to their students, and many have responded to this need by purchasing online curriculum. While purchased content can nicely compliment face-to-face instruction, it will likely need a teacher's adjustment to fit the needs of her individual learners. Even some virtual schools purchase ready-made online content to some degree, but they do find the need to make adjustments. Fully implementing online curriculum does not stop at account set-up. Online courses demand constant maintenance and revision based on availability of evolving resources and access (Watson & Gemin, 2009).

If teachers are truly dedicated to reaching their 21st century audiences, their lesson preparations should include creating online content. Teachers must be able to evaluate purchased content and arrange it in a way that will make sense to their clientele. Teachers must also be equipped with both content knowledge and technical skill so they can create learning objects to supplement or differentiate existing course content (Chou & Tsai, 2002). Employers will begin looking for teachers who possess skills to create their own digital resources for multiple uses: re-teaching, differentiation, or extended learning instruction. Students seek answers to many of their questions online throughout their daily lives. But very few can find their personal teacher's explanation of the newest concept presented in class when they need assistance outside classroom walls. And if information from their teachers—the experts--is not accessible, they will seek alternative sources to learn. It is imperative that educators rise to the challenge of leading the effort in the creation and management of online learning content.

University pre-service online educator coursework is currently underdeveloped. Many virtual schools are forced to conduct their teacher training independently because students exiting college have not been exposed to that teaching platform and are not prepared. Many online schools find great success if they incorporate engaging skill practice into the training and provide ongoing support for their teachers (Archibald, Coggshall, Croft & Goe, 2011). This Curriculum Design project is intended to serve as an undergraduate course for pre-service e-teachers, including field experience in the online setting. The purpose of this course is to provide teachers with entry-level online teaching skills.

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