Presentation Proposal

*One Literacy Education Course – Two Delivery Formats:*
*A Comparative Analysis of Learning Effectiveness*
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The prevalence of distance and online learning continue to grow in higher education (Schweizer, Hayslett, & Chaplock, 2008; Lin, Dyer, & Guo, 2012). According to the Sloan Consortium 2012 Survey of Online Learning, the number of students taking at least one online course has now surpassed 6.7 million, an increase of 570,000 over the previous year, and 32% of higher education students now take at least one course online. The majority of these individuals tend to be those—often referred to as "non-traditional students—" who require / prefer more flexibility in scheduling and mobility due in part to family and/ or work responsibilities, and who are not able to participate in the more traditional post-secondary learning experience. Additionally, the Digest of Education Statistics, published by the United States government, reports that while computer / information sciences and business tend to make up 27% and 24 % of total online enrollments, a surprising 22% are reported to be Education students— those seeking either initial teaching certification or advanced degrees. In view of this data and armed with one additional government statistic that states that in 2013, 18% of all undergraduate students are predicted to receive 80% or more of their education online, this teacher-researcher—an experienced educator in both methods of instructional delivery—set out to examine whether the learning experiences and learning outcomes of students in two separate sections of one Literacy education course would differ between traditional and fully online formats.

In spite of the fact that not all institutions of higher learning—and particularly those with programs in the teacher education arena—have fully embraced, accepted, and/or placed significant value on online teacher education, the need and desire for such continues to grow (Schweizer, Hayslett, & Chaplock, 2008; Bair & Bair, 2011). While online learning may not represent the "best fit" for all students seeking teaching degrees / teacher certification, offering that option can enable a university to reach a segment of the population not otherwise available or accessible (Olsen & Werhan, 2005). Likewise, teacher educators who provide quality face-to-face instruction may be unwilling or unable to duplicate this quality in the online classroom. Students care about the quality of their teacher in both learning platforms (Rice, 2012), and it is a known fact that the teacher sets the tone for and is the major contributing factor to student success in any classroom (Reutzel & Cooter, 2012).

The opportunity to 1) create an online counterpart of an established Literacy education class, and 2) to provide instruction in both the traditional and online learning environments during the same Summer

semester was both exhilarating and overwhelming, as it provided the potential for an unusual but rewarding personal learning experience. Both sections of the course used the same two textbooks, contained identical course content / learning objectives, contained two identical weekly assignments (Discussion Boards and Reader Responses), the same mid-semester and final exam, and the same major course project. In an effort to provide even further instructional and content consistency, selected class sessions were videoed during the traditional class session and made available to the online class. A detailed analysis of student products, assessment performance, and instructor observations is being used to determine if there was a significant difference both qualitatively and quantitatively between the two learning environments. According to an upcoming article in *the Journal of Teacher Education*, a related study found that online teacher professional development has the same effect on student learning and teacher behavior as more traditional face-to-face models, so it will be interesting to discover if similar outcomes are found in this investigation. Preliminary findings will be shared and audience input is encouraged and welcomed.

## References

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Because of the continued growth, prevalence, and desire for quality online learning opportunities in higher education, I have recently had the opportunity to begin developing additional course offerings in our Literacy Education program at the University of Houston – Clear Lake. This presentation focuses on one unique experience during Summer 2013 in which I simultaneously taught both a traditional, face-to-face (web-enhanced) and a fully online version of the same course, Survey of Reading. While one instructor teaching two different delivery formats of the same course is not that unusual, this experience was, as one instructor was allowed to facilitate the same course—both online and face-to-face, during the same time frame, using the same texts, with identical objectives, assignments, exams, and final course project.

There were no expectations that one class would outperform the other; the goal was simply to be a participant observer with each group, collecting and analyzing data to determine whether an equivalent learning opportunity had been provided to both groups of students. Every effort was made to equalize the learning experiences of both groups of students. For example, one major component of this course is an in-depth study of phonetic analysis and phonemic awareness which, as we all acknowledge, is critically significant content for all EC-6 teacher education candidates. In the on-ground class, this "lecture" includes at least four hours of direct instruction and modeling at the beginning of the course. As I began to plan for these sessions, I realized that even though I had identified and included comparable videos from a respected source, that did not equate to the exact scope and sequence of information that I would be covering face-to-face. Therefore, I opted to video these sessions in my on-ground class and make them available to the online class, realizing that any measures of effectiveness would be made stronger with this decision, particularly since the mid-course assessment consisted entirely of this content.

The numbers below indicate only a brief preliminary review of findings in this action-research oriented study. End-of-course evaluations were equally strong regarding student perceptions of their learning. Further analysis is ongoing, and a similar comparative study is planned for the Summer of 2014 with a different set of Literacy Education courses.

### A Comparison of OL vs F2F Literacy Education Class Assignment Scores

| | Phonics Mid-Term (55 pts) | Lesson Plan (30 pts) | Final Exam Part I (65 pts) | Final Exam Part II (35 pts) | Guided Reading Groups Project (100 pts) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fully Online (N = 25) | $\bar{x}$ = 48.0 | $\bar{x}$ = 28.0 | $\bar{x}$ = 48.0 (w/o Bonus) <br> $\bar{x}$ = 48.0 (w/ Bonus) | $\bar{x}$ = 36.6 | $\bar{x}$ = 91.4 |
| F2F / Web-Enhanced (N = 9) | $\bar{x}$ = 42.6 | $\bar{x}$ = 28.9 | $\bar{x}$ = 50.0 (w/o Bonus) <br> $\bar{x}$ = 53.3 (w/ Bonus) | $\bar{x}$ = 36.0 | $\bar{x}$ = 88.9 |