

This is for the presentation we will do at FATE 2009

Abstract of presentation:

In this case study, a partnership between a large research university's teacher education program and its corresponding state virtual school was examined. This teacher education program offers a course to its pre-service teachers that focuses solely on online education and the philosophy and pedagogy associated with it. What sets this program apart from others is the fact that it began offering its pre-service teachers virtual school internship experiences in the Spring of 2007, an experience that exposes its pre-service teachers to different levels of interactions within a state-led virtual school. While these experiences are technically operated as internships, they are not recognized by the state for teaching certification, so if pre-service teachers are interested in pursuing virtual school teaching positions, they have to participate in the virtual school experience in addition to their traditional school internships. The university in which this program takes place is located in the southeastern United States. The program neither gives participants a certificate for participation nor provides them graduate school credit for their experience. The pre-service teachers who participated volunteered for the experience and this study.

The purpose of this study was to describe the essence of these virtual school experiences as expressed by three pre-service teachers. The research question for this study was "How do pre-service teachers experience virtual school experiences?" and was designed as a phenomenological study that allowed a bird's eye view of the intricacies that transpired in the pre-service teachers' experiences.

By conducting this study, an understanding was constructed regarding what teacher education programs should do to better prepare their pre-service teachers, all of whom will become 21st century teachers, responsible for creating blended and online learning environments in virtual and brick-and-mortar schools. This study has also led the way in guiding virtual school experiences within teacher education programs. These teacher education programs have a responsibility to many: (1) to the teachers who they are preparing, who need to become the instructional designers of 21st century learning environments, where learning aligns with the real world, outside of the classroom; (2) to the education system, which has a responsibility to provide support for both the nurturing of the 21st century teachers and the development and maintenance of the 21st century learning environments; and most importantly, (3) to the K-12 students, who will become tomorrow's globally-responsible citizens.

And this one is for the presentation we will be giving at VSS 2009 -

Technological innovation has changed education in the 21st century. As a teacher educator, I am aware of the unique skills needed to develop quality 21st century teachers and understand the need to best prepare them to teach in blended and online settings. Through a university-virtual school partnership, student teachers were paired with experienced virtual school teachers in this study. Results and implications for teacher education, virtual schools and education policy will be discussed.