Best Practices for Online Education

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In 2006, NACOL published a Guide to Teaching Online Courses.

Part of this document included information on "Defining an Effective Online Education Environment".
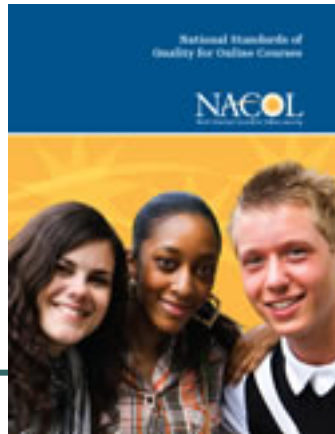
Online Education Defined:

- A planned course of instruction paralleling what might be offered in a middle or high school, but conducted primarily online.

- Students and teachers separated by time and space.

- Asynchronous and synchronous communication.

- One or more instructors who maintain an online presence in the course.

- Formative and summative evaluation.

- The course and the instructor(s) are monitored and evaluated.

- Communication that provides quick academic and technical support.

Course Design Standards:

- Instructor-led
- Student-centered
- Collaborative learning activities
- Flexible schedule (24/7) with guidelines for student pacing (set due dates).
- Students should be challenged to use 21st century skills. (See www.21stcenturyskills.org)
- Consistent and clear directions and expectations.
- Account for different learning styles.
- Use the latest Best Practices.

National Standards for *Course Quality*

- In 2007, NACOL published the <u>National Standards of Quality for Online Courses</u>.

- This can be viewed and downloaded at: <u>http://www.nacol.org/nationalstandards/</u>

Summary of a Quality Online Course

- Content:
  - Aligned with state or national standards.
  - Sufficient rigor, depth, and breadth.
  - Information literacy and communication skills are an integral part of the curriculum.
  - Course overview and syllabus are available.
  - Copyright issues are addressed.
  - Clear expectations for academic integrity and "netiquette".
  - Assessment and assignment answers are explained.

Summary of a Quality Online Course, continued…

- Instructional Design
  - Varied ways to learn and multiple levels of mastery.
  - Organized into units and lessons.
  - Each lesson includes an overview, content and activities, assignments, and assessments.
  - Active, engaging activities.
  - Higher-order thinking and critical reasoning.
  - Appropriate opportunities for student-teacher communication and interaction.
  - Appropriate interaction between each student and the coursework.

Summary of a Quality Online Course, continued..

- Student Assessment
    - Adequate and appropriate methods are in place to assess mastery of content.
    - Ongoing and frequent assessments occur to verify a student's readiness to move on.
    - Students must always be aware of their progress, beyond just letter grades.
    - Teachers have grading rubrics and examples of finished assignments.

Summary of a Quality Online Course, continued…

- Technology
  - Teachers can add content themselves.
  - The course accommodates various school calendars.
  - Technology requirements are clearly stated.
  - Prerequisite skills are clearly stated.
  - The course is accessible by as many students as possible, even those with lower computer and Internet connection speeds.
  - Orientation training is available.

Summary of a Quality Online Course, continued…

- Course Evaluation and Management
  - Peer review and student evaluations are available.
  - The course is evaluated regularly.
  - The course is updated regularly.
  - The course provider is authorized to operate in the state in which the course is offered.
  - Instructors meet all licensing requirements and have been trained in online instruction.

Summary of a Quality Online Course, continued…

- 21st Century Skills
  - The course intentionally emphasizes 21st century skills, including:
    - Learning and thinking skills
    - ICT literacy (Information and Communication Technologies)
    - Self-directed learning
    - Global awareness
    - 21st century assessments
    - 21st century content
    - 21st century skills in the core subjects
  - For more on this, visit: http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/

National Standards for Quality Online *Teaching*
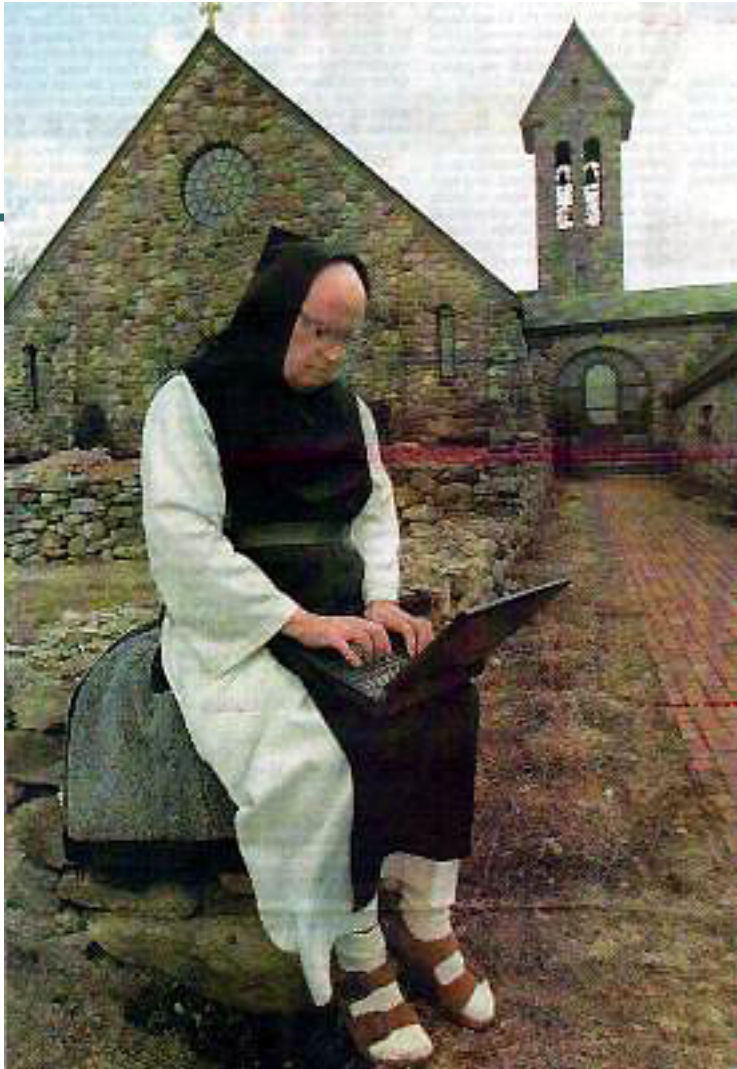
- Published in February of 2008.

- Provides rating scales in several categories for evaluating online educators.

Summary of a Quality Online Teacher

- The teacher meets the professional teaching standards established by a state-licensing agency or the teacher has academic credentials in the field in which he or she is teaching.
- The teacher has the prerequisite technology skills to teach online.
- The teacher plans, designs and incorporates strategies to encourage active learning, interaction, participation and collaboration in the online environment.
- The teacher provides online leadership in a manner that promotes student success through regular feedback, prompt response and clear expectations.
- The teacher models, guides and encourages legal, ethical, safe and healthy behavior related to technology use.
- The teacher has experienced online learning from the perspective of a student.
- The teacher understands and is responsive to students with special needs in the online classroom.

Summary of a Quality Online Teacher, continued...

- The teacher demonstrates competencies in creating and implementing assessments in online learning environments in ways that assure validity and reliability of instruments and procedures.
- The teacher develops and delivers assessments, projects, and assignments that meet standards-based learning goals and assesses learning progress by measuring student achievement of learning goals.
- The teacher demonstrates competencies in using data and findings from assessments and other data sources to modify instructional methods and content and to guide student learning.
- The teacher demonstrates frequent and effective strategies that enable both teacher and students to complete self- and pre-assessments.
- The teacher collaborates with colleagues.
- The teacher arranges media and content to help students and teachers transfer knowledge most effectively in the online environment.

Questions?

Online education is everywhere!

Are you on board?