INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE ON ONLINE LEARNING IN K–12 SCHOOLS AND TEACHER EDUCATION

In 2006–2007, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation awarded a grant to the Sloan Consortium and Hunter College to conduct a survey of online learning in K–12 schools. For more than a decade, the Foundation had been most generous in awarding grants for online learning that focused on higher education, however, this was the first award directed specifically to the K–12 environment. The timing of this grant coincided with the growing perception of the importance and use of online learning in K–12 schools. During the past several years, the editors of JALN also noticed an increase in article submissions related to teacher education. As a result, a decision was made to publish a special edition of JALN focusing on online learning in K–12 schools and teacher education.

The editors have selected five research-based articles that examine important topics related to K–12 and teacher education. As a lead-in to these articles, Chris Dede, Timothy E. Wirth Professor of Learning Technologies at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education, agreed to an interview that provides his views on the overall state of online learning technology in K–12 schools and its implications for teacher educators. Brief summaries of the five articles follow.

K–12 Online Learning: A Survey of U.S. School District Administrators by Anthony G. Picciano, Hunter College, and Jeff Seaman, the Sloan Consortium: This is the first national study of school district leaders to examine online and blended learning in American primary and secondary schools. It establishes important baseline data on a number of issues that other researchers can use as they pursue studies of online learning in K–12 schools.

An Interpretative Model of Key Heuristics that Promote Collaborative Dialogue Among Online Learners by Sarah Haavind, Lesley University: This paper describes a preliminary study designed to begin addressing the challenge of fostering cognitive presence among secondary learners. This study also describes aspects of teaching presence, specifically how to engage in collaborative dialogue, collaborative activity designs and evaluation rubrics that help to promote substantive, collaborative dialogue in Virtual High School™ classes.

The Louisiana Algebra I Online Initiative as a Model for Teacher Professional Development: Examining Teacher Experiences by Laura M. O'Dwyer, Boston College, and Rebecca Carey and Glen Kleiman, Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC): The Louisiana Algebra I Online initiative represents one type of online model than can address both the need for improving course offerings as well as addressing teacher shortages. Using a sample of teachers drawn from six school districts and two private schools, this research suggests that the Louisiana Algebra I Online initiative provides teachers with an effective model for authentic and embedded professional development that is relevant to their classroom experiences.

Learning Science Online: A Descriptive Study of Online Science Courses for Teachers by Jodi Asbell-Clarke and Elizabeth Rowe, Technology Education Resource Center (TERC): Using a sample of 40 online science courses for teachers, this study examines the nature and variety of instructional methods and activities used as well as communication and students' perceptions of supports within the course. This research is unique in that it is the first aggregate study of online science courses offered by a wide

spectrum of educational programs.

The Presentation of Self in Everyday Ether: A Corpus Analysis of Student Self-tellings in Online Graduate Courses by Carla Meskill and Gulnara Sadykova, SUNY Albany: This study examines the patterns and substance of student self introductions in nine fully online graduate courses in Education. The question of how, in a tightly defined social/academic context, adults use written language to present themselves to others is taken up through content analysis supported by linguistic concordancing. Two hundred twenty-three "Meet Your Classmates" entries are examined for their form and content.

The editors of JALN hope our readers enjoy this special issue and welcome any comments.

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