



The Vermont Legislative Research Shop

Distance Learning and Technology in the Classroom

Distance Learning

Because of advances in interactive technology distance learning is now becoming a popular educational tool. Distance learning uses email, video conferencing, newsgroups, and electronic forums to heighten the level of education for students of all ages. According to the National Governors Association:

Internet-based distance learning is finding its way into U.S. high schools. Home schooled students, school districts without enough qualified teachers, and the children of migrant

high school before they are legally allowed too at the age of 16. Overall Colorado online schools have shown mediocre academic achievement.²

In 1999 Doctor Sheila Tucker at East Carolina University conducted a study of students age 19-51 in post-secondary school to discover whether distance education was better, worse, or as good as traditional education. She found that “no significant differences were found between pre-test scores, homework grades, research paper grades and final course grades. However, there were significant differences between the two groups with regard to age, post-test scores, and final exam scores. Distance education students scored higher in all three categories”³

The North Central Regional Laboratory conducted a meta-analysis of studies on distance learning with funding from the U.S. Department of Education in 2004. The study analyzed the combined results of 14 different studies. The study concluded that distance learning is as effective as classroom instruction. Howeve

In a number of studies, there was evidence that a higher percentage of students dropped out of distance learning courses before the course was completed compared to students in a conventional classroom.⁷

United States Distance Learning Association

As a way of spreading distance education throughout the fifty states, the United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) was founded in 1987 by Patrick Portway, Dr. Smith Holt, and Dr. Ralph Mills. Their intent was to create new ways of merging the growing education and training needs with all of the growing concepts of communications technologies. They provide two training programs one which will teach students how to use distance learning successfully, and another to show teachers and administrators how to successfully implement a distance learning program. The USDLA serves as a catalyst for the formation of partnerships among education, business, healthcare, and government. In 2004 they created the Distance Learning Accreditation Board (DLAB), which has the purpose of reviewing and accrediting different distance learning institutions. Through DLAB they can evaluate the effectiveness of distance learning, the quality of institutions, and provide assurance through its publications and website.⁸

Technology in the Classroom

In addition to distance learning, the following initiatives have been established in public education to promote educational technology.

Washington implemented the high-speed K–20 Network, giving schools across the state an unprecedented opportunity to connect students and educators with online resources. The video-

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salaries or benefits for school district employees. To ensure that the state's education institutions work together the program coordinates access to information technology rather than duplicate existing services.¹⁶

Compiled at the request of Senator Wendy Wilton by Daniel Wander, Richard Hodges, and Micah Rabin on February 22, 2005 under the supervision of Professor Anthony Gierzynski.

Disclaimer: This report was been prepared by undergraduate students at the University of Vermont under the