



Essentials of Online Teaching: A Standards-Based Guide

McCable, Margaret Foey, and González-Flores, Patricia
Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017

Book Review

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Essentials of Online Teaching: A Standards-Based Guide could contribute to lively and relevant discussions about the challenges and opportunities of online courses. The book is unique because it takes the reader on a journey from the preliminary design of a course through its development and final phase of instruction. A further distinctive feature of the book is that it includes source materials from hundreds of teachers who have extensive knowledge of and experience with teaching online courses. By collaborating with such a diverse group of educators, the authors provide an impressive set of approaches to guide teaching decisions, assessing students' progress, and reflecting on factors that influence a successful, online teaching experience. The book is a wonderful and needed resource that offers helpful models and examples of courses that integrate a range of interactive methods for learning such as discussion forums, blogs, and chats.

The book begins with a general overview of online education and describes technologies for effective teaching as well as what a teacher should focus on before the semester begins. After offering suggestions on how to launch a successful online course, McCabe and González-Flores examine how teachers monitor and support students' learning once the course starts. In addition, they address ways to evaluate students during the middle weeks of a course and how to evaluate the effectiveness of the course design in case improvements are needed to enhance the teaching and learning process. Other important aspects of online teaching and learning are collaboration and assessment. The authors provide explanations and examples of how discussions and collaboration should work as well as how to evaluate standards of practice.

In the Introduction, McCabe and González-Flores discuss the scope of foundational theorists in distance education as well as the current work of researchers in the field. The book is a useful

resource for teachers who are “new to online teaching or those who want to improve their practice” (3). This book will also benefit educational and corporate trainers, academic administrators, department heads, decision-makers, entrepreneurs, teachers, and students who work with online course development and training. In fact, anyone interested in education can use *Essentials of Online Teaching: A Standards-Based Guide* to “understand the challenges online instructors and trainers face and design products to serve their needs” (4).

In an early chapter, the authors show how online education has evolved over the years and how various models can effectively work for teachers and students. Historically, online teaching as a “concept and term sprang onto the educational landscape in the late 1980s as computer conferencing software began to support interaction between teachers and students” (22). Eventually, those in education, including researchers, marketing professionals, and program developers started conversations that grew into new ways of instruction. In early conversations, these new ways used passive language that de-emphasized the personal dimension in teaching. According to the authors, passive language sends an incorrect message; namely, an implication that online courses are characterized, primarily, by automation rather than an active and interactive process of teaching and learning. Hence, this book describes an interactive process from beginning to end where students and teachers take advantage of asynchronous communication and do not allow remote access or intermittent exchange prevent engagement, reflection, or assessment. Recognizing the unique character of online courses, the authors encourage as much activity as possible by teachers helping students navigate the online environment through a variety of pedagogical and management strategies.

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