

## Toward Quality in DL Practice: What is it? How do we know it?

Randy LaBonte

DL Consultant, Ministry of Education

604-983-0636 // [rlabonte@shaw.ca](mailto:rlabonte@shaw.ca)

### The Vision for DL

- Ø Distributed learning in BC will be a quality, dynamic and engaging learning environment that all students in the province can access.
- Ø It will not be limited by schedules, calendars, facilities or locations.

### DL is Growing

- In the US by 25 percent each year
- In BC DL student enrolment headcount 5000 in 2003 – project 50,000 in 2008
- Most growth is in the cross-enrolled students in grades 10-12
- Most DL schools hiring new teachers and coping with staff turnover
- Changes & growth have led to confusion

### Recognizing Quality in DL Practice

- § While quality is difficult to define, its importance is universally appreciated (*Garvin 1988*).
- § Quality's economical importance comes from its perceived ability to lower costs, improve employee commitment, and ensure continuous improvement within a dynamic environment (*Dawson&Palmer 1995*).
- § Its pedagogical meaning focuses at enhancing the process of learning and the interaction between the learner and the learning environment.

### JK Rice (2003)

- Analysis of 400,000 students in 3000 schools found the most important predictor of quality was the teacher
- Teacher effect on student achievement was both additive and cumulative

### DL policies and agreement

- Focus on quality – DL Standards articulate quality learning in a DL environment
- Focus on engagement – no funding without active learning
- Focus on achievement – continuous enrolment and Ministry data collections
- Focus on transparency – clear flow of Ministry funding with no money directly paid to parents

### Standards Purposes:

- § Improve quality
- § Provide a framework for accountability and continuous improvement
- § Guide development and evaluation of instructional practice
- § Describe baseline for content and resources

### DL 2006 achievement results

- 2005/06 FSA participating DL students at or above provincial average (30% participation)
- Grade 10 and 12 provincial exam results for DL students similar to provincial results
- Overall grade 12 graduation rate for DL students is comparable to regular school
- Satisfaction surveys indicate teachers, students and parents are more satisfied with DL

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### Completion rates

- Public school Dogwood completion 79%
- DL K-7 completion 89% (based on Sept 2006 cohort reports to December 2007)
- Grade 8 – 12 completion 65% (based on Sept 2006 cohort reports to December 2007)
- North America 70%
  - How completion is defined and measured varies
    - BC measures activation based on first assignment submission
    - Some states measure from 7 weeks duration in course
    - Others measure based on half course completion/time

### No Significant Difference?

- Shepherd (2001) review of 300 studies on education medium – ‘no significant difference’  
<http://www.nosignificantdifference.org/>
- "... when compared, face to face education with Internet Based Distance Education, there is a significant difference in favor of the Internet Based Distance education."
  - Significant Difference - Better Results with Technology
  - 2006 - Sahin, C. S. Overcoming the "No Significant Difference" Phenomenon in Distance Education by Internet Andolu University, Turkey <http://aof.edu.tr/iodl2006>

### DL Quality Review

1. Foster improved quality in distributed learning practice
2. Support implementation of Ministry legislation, policy and DL Agreement requirements
3. Assist in establishing and confirming sound practice in all DL schools  
*While audits guide compliance in funding and reporting, the quality review is intended to guide improved student achievement, choice and satisfaction while meeting DL standards*

### Data-driven Process Analyzing

*Student Success* – based on: DL achievement data, provincial exam data, FSA results, satisfaction surveys, district and school-level data, observations of learning

*Instructional Practice* – based on: DL standards, research on emerging DL instructional practice, DL staff experience and training, integration and use of educational technologies, strategies for supporting learner engagement, DL materials used

### DL Quality Review Process

1. Internal review by DL educators
  - § Rubrics including DL standards, data sets, support planning processes
  - § Collection and monitoring of above data to shape DL practice
2. External Review Team
  - § Initial meeting(s) with school staff and district staff
  - § Observation/discussion with instructional, support and admin staff
  - § Discussion of observations – external team and district/school staff
3. Post site review meeting
  - § Observations and data analysis, areas of strength /improvement
4. Publication of external review formal report

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#### Finding Quality... *Audience question and results*

To measure quality in online learning the most important thing to assess is:

*(Results of audience poll of 44 people posted in percentage)*

- a) Results (achievement data) – 20%
- b) Satisfaction (satisfaction surveys) – 38%
- c) Popularity (sign ups to courses) – 0%
- d) Pedagogy/Instructional practice – 42%

#### Quality Review Pilots

- 10 sites involved in pilot (SD8/22/23/34/35/37/41/59/60/63)
- DL viewed differently by districts (some view it as a special program, alternate school, home schooling, continuing education) – most do not see DL as a 'cash cow' as believed in past
- Innovation with educational technologies was found in the DL school and/or in the district
- Some still using old methodologies from correspondence school days
- School and DL educator focus was on completion and satisfaction

#### Interesting practices...

- Increased use of synchronous tools and events
- Development of online presence by DL teachers
- Looking to create cohort groups to support peer to peer interaction
- Blending learning (F2F with online)
- Project-based work
- Portfolio assessment strategies
- Enhanced use of video
- Student-led and controlled technologies

#### Finalizing the Process

- Working group established to debrief process/results, changes to process made (May)
- Publication of the Quality Review Process in June for implementation September 2008
- "Quality is never an accident. It is the result of planning, teamwork and commitment to excellence." -- Author unknown

#### Links

- BC Ministry of Education Distributed Learning  
§ [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist\\_learning/](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist_learning/)
- BC Distributed Learning Agreement  
§ [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist\\_learning/documents/dist\\_learn\\_agmt.pdf](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist_learning/documents/dist_learn_agmt.pdf)
- BC Distributed Learning Standards  
§ [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist\\_learning/documents/dl\\_standards.pdf](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist_learning/documents/dl_standards.pdf)
- LearnNow BC  
§ <http://www.learnnowbc.gov.bc.ca>