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Interest in Online Learning

By Andrew Topper

The NEA study (2004) found that public school educators gained greater familiarity with technology and were using it to help improve their job effectiveness but were still not comfortable with their level of training or knowledge about using technology for direct instructional purposes.

Teachers in K-12 schools are experiencing more diversity in student populations and growing availability of technology in their labs and classrooms. Many times, their prior teacher preparation has not provided them with the skills required to meet changing student population needs. Most teachers are unable to adequately access information and integrate technology serving their students' learning and instructional needs (NEA, 2004). As a result, there is a growing need for higher educational offerings that provide opportunities for ongoing professional development in these areas.

In 2006, the Michigan legislature passed a

law requiring that all High School graduates must have at least 3-credits of online instruction by 2011. This will likely lead to a large influx of High School teachers in Michigan needing knowledge and skills to teach effectively online, which is part of our existing graduate educational technology program.

Evidence of possible interest in this area was observed at a *Michigan Virtual University Online Learning Symposium* held in Lansing on Thursday, February 8, 2007, where an initial estimate of 180 participants resulted in over 400 people attending. Many K-12 school districts and local ISD's are adopting and

using web-based learning environments, like Moodle, that support online instruction.

Within the College of Education, we are working closely with the Provost's Office to ensure that Grand Valley State University will provide distant or online degree programs in the future. We see online degree programs as a continuation of the high quality and access to graduate education GVSU has provided in the past. 

Gains & gaps in education technology: An NEA survey of educational technologies in U.S. schools (2004). National Education Association.

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