

## Review of: Clark, T., & Barbour, M.K. (Eds.). (2015). *Online, Blended, and Distance Education in Schools: Building Successful Programs*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

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*Online, Blended, and Distance Education in Schools* is an edited book by Tom Clark and Michael K. Barbour. Many will recognize Clark and Barbour for their work as trusted and influential scholars in the field of K-12 online learning. Contributed chapters are written by respected scholars, leaders, and practitioners in the field. This book is part of a series on distance education edited by Michael Grahame Moore.

The broad questions guiding the book are these: “What can North American educators learn from international K-12 educators? What can international K-12 educators learn from [North American programs]” (p. xiii)? This regional distinction is important since educational practice is often studied within a North American context; yet many outside of North America have important stories to tell related to challenges and triumphs with online and blended learning in schools, both in terms of high-level policy and more practical aspects of programmatic implementation.

The book is divided into four sections with 17 chapters. In Part One, the editors provide a brief history of major shifts in practice related to distance education in schools over the past century. The chapter carries us from distance education’s beginnings as correspondence courses conducted via mail to the recent estimates by the U.S. Department of Education of nearly 2 million enrollments in K-12 distance education offerings in 2009–2010 and the approximately 600,000 enrollments in recently-opened Chinese online schools. Clark and Barbour argue for a more deliberate designing of experiences to prepare teachers and administrators for this rapidly evolving

educational landscape; and they urge policymakers to match these improvements with visionary and funding support.

Part Two addresses research and policy with six chapters. In their chapter, Kathryn Kennedy and Leanna Archambault describe the research related to high quality online pedagogy, design, and instruction; they provide tools for guiding quality; and they describe efforts by educator preparation programs to ready teachers and administrators for online and blended learning in schools. Christy G. Keeler’s chapter highlights strategies and methods of designing instruction and assessment for online and blended school learning environments as well as the challenges and opportunities related to teacher-designed courses. In his chapter, Rob Darrow outlines the technologies of online and blended learning (e.g., learning management systems, mobile devices, open educational resources, games) and strategies for managing related costs. Richard E. Ferdig, Cathy Cavanaugh, and Joseph R. Freidhoff address the challenges related to conducting research in K-12 online, blended, and distance education, which is often distributed across multiple places and people. They offer essential findings from the current knowledgebase of research in the field, and they call for focusing future research studies on programs that have demonstrated high quality. Victoria Raish and Ali Carr-Chellman’s chapter addresses the origins and nature of cyber charters generally and examines the case of cyber charters in Pennsylvania specifically. Finally, Raymond M. Rose, Alese Smith, Karen Johnson, and David Glick detail the opportunities and challenges educators face in designing equitable and accessible learning in online environments; and they provide a useful checklist for doing so.

Part Three presents nine chapters on practice-oriented case studies. The first four are situated in the United States. Kevin Oliver and Tracy Weeks’ chapter highlights the beneficial role of program evaluation in the development and ongoing management of the North Carolina Virtual Public School, with far-

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reaching implications for student success, instructional practice, and course development processes. Dazhi Yang and Kerry Rice share the story of Boise State University's conception and implementation of a competency-based online teaching endorsement program for teacher candidates to gain content knowledge and field experiences related to teaching online. In her chapter, Mickey Revenaugh's case study outlines the creation of and first-year challenges related to Connection Education's Nexus Academy, a model through which blended learning high schools capitalize on personalized learning technologies. The chapter by Jhone M. Ebert and Allison Powell presents a case study of the evolution of Clark County School District's online learning program, including its history, policy and funding details, early collaborations with other virtual schools, teacher professional development, course development workflows, and design principles. The chapter concludes with future directions for online learning in the district.

The remaining five case studies are situated outside of the United States. John Smallwood, Jennifer Reaburn, and Stephen Baker's chapter highlights the 20-year history of Virtual High School in Ontario, Canada, including lessons learned along the way. Cathy Cavanaugh's chapter takes us to Nepal to reveal barriers to online learning. Cavanaugh argues online education may play a part in providing access to the nearly 200,000 children currently estimated to not be attending school regularly in Nepal, and she calls for an international educational clearinghouse of resources for use by educational leaders, teachers and students in countries that most need it. Stephen Harris details online learning at a private school in New South Wales, Australia, providing a fascinating look at the Australian legislative and educational context with its unique challenges for growth in online learning. In their chapter, Helen Boulton and Lisa Hasler Waters present the cases of five primary and secondary schools, situated in the United Kingdom, using virtual learning environments to personalize student learning along a continuum they share in the chapter. Finally, Hyeonjin Kim and Jeonghee Seo's chapter

illuminates Korea's Cyber Home Learning System, designed to provide supplemental tutoring to elementary and secondary students to narrow educational gaps. The chapter offers detailed suggestions for evolving this system into the future as learning preferences and technological affordances shift.

In their Part Four closing chapter, Michael K. Barbour and Tom Clark return to summarize broad themes introduced by authors in the preceding chapters on research, policy, and case studies of practice. They close by highlighting trends in online, blended, and distance education in schools.

*Online, Blended, and Distance Education in Schools* provides the reader with a wealth of vicarious experiences as well as important research findings in online, blended and distance education in schools. This book is a must-read for school leaders (e.g., school administrators, media specialists, technology specialists)—regardless of their school's status with online or blended offerings—because it so ably illuminates challenges and opportunities within the current digital educational environment. Instructional designers and anyone involved with designing schools, programs, or online courses would benefit greatly from the lessons presented herein. This book is appropriate for graduate students of education in educational technology and related fields. The case studies offer students in-depth explorations of specific scenarios, which could stimulate in-class discussions and related activities. For researchers in educational technology and related fields, the book presents many areas of potential scholarly inquiry, and the editors and chapter authors helpfully point the way to areas of need.

*Online, Blended, and Distance Education in Schools* is offered in both print and electronic formats, and the authors provide a companion website (<https://onlineblendedschooling.wikispaces.com>) with chapter abstracts, discussion questions, a list of references pertaining to each chapter, and pedagogical suggestions for using the textbook and supplemental resources in online or face-to-face educational settings.

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