

Report from OLC Innovate
Career Development
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I recently attended the Online Learning Consortium's (OLC) Innovate conference. Innovate is primarily a higher education organization, and many of their topics were directly related to the high school environment. While at the consortium I heard how universities were dealing with many of the same issues we face with online learning in KPBSD.

- 1) Academic Integrity was a major topic in sessions, and was also addressed by a number of vendors. Proctoring of online exams was one of the topics. Online/remote proctoring services are now available. I am in contact with a few of the vendors to determine if there may be an online proctoring service that would fit our program and be affordable. Online proctoring would add credibility to online classes. This could be an important consideration as the district looks to leverage additional online materials and methods.
The second type of academic integrity was plagiarism. Vendors like Turnitin offer plagiarism detection services. I am also having conversations with two vendors who offer plagiarism detection. Turnitin is expensive. A second vendor has a more affordable solution. Two schools in the district already have Turnitin services. A district wide license would be ideal.
- 2) Universal Design for Learning (UDL) was also frequently discussed. UDL deals with making courses accessible to all students. The concept of UDL is to design courses for accessibility, rather than trying to add accessibility after the course is finished. As we increase online content use, accessibility will become an increasingly important topic. Providing closed captioning for videos was one of the major issues. Another view of UDL was to consider platform accessibility and design courses and materials to work well on any platform. Testing webpages for mobile devices and different browsers and operating systems was discussed.
- 3) One session I attended was led by Angela Dunn, an expert in innovation in the health care industry. This session was titled, "How Will Future Trends Influence the Way We Learn and Work: Prepare to Think Differently." Some of the key takeaways were that the current educational system, with focus on degrees, was quickly moving toward irrelevance. One statistic cited was that by 2020, 40% of workers will be free-lancers. Takeaway...Building networks is a critical skill to explicitly teach students. Another point made, and this one really hit home, is that educators should go to non-educational conferences to get an idea of where education needs to go. Entrepreneurial conferences were a suggestion for good educational targets. Takeaway...educators conferencing with other educators isn't always the best way to develop innovative ideas. Another phrase that stuck with me from this session was the "myth of the degree." As has become quite apparent, getting a degree is no longer a sufficient way to prepare for employment.

This was an interesting conference that spurred some strong ideas for me. It was also somewhat reassuring that universities were wrestling with some of the same issues that we encounter with online learning. The thought of going to an entrepreneurial conference, to see what startups need and are looking for, was thought provoking. Going to educational conferences does tend to lend itself to rehashing old ideas, rather than provoking radically innovative thought.


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