

Welcome to the beginning of the *Action Research Exchange*! Perhaps it would be better to call it a culmination rather than a beginning, however. The combined efforts of many University faculty and many dedicated online graduate students were required to arrive at this place in cyberspace.

## ACTION

There has been ACTION, and a lot of it, over the past two years. The action research described in this premiere issue represents the capstone experience of 18 students as they completed the requirements for the online Ed.S. (Education Specialist) in Instructional Technology degree. However, as the students began the program, neither they nor we knew exactly how their work would eventually be disseminated. We did know from the outset that we wanted the capstone experience of the students to be an action research project done in and for the benefit of their educational organizations. We knew that these post-master's students would be required to write a thesis, but we had the leeway to re-design the thesis process and product to more adequately fit the innovative and technological nature of the program. We knew we wanted the thesis to be in a 'journal-ready' format so that these new researchers could publish their work in a timely fashion. We hadn't dreamed of starting our own online journal to showcase the action research of our students.

The careful crafting of new thesis guidelines led to the transformation of a traditional five-chapter print thesis. The new electronic journal-ready Ed.S. thesis contains all elements of the traditional thesis constructed in an alternative format, archived on CD-ROM, and disseminated (in part) on the WWW. The following four products together comprise the journal-ready Ed.S. thesis: 1) Article manuscript describing the completed action research project including theoretical framework, succinct review of literature, concise presentation of methodology, findings, discussion and recommendations in the form of action planning, 2) Action Research Proposal, 3) Literature Review, and 4) Learning Community Report documenting the means through which the action research was communicated to an appropriate audience in the educational organization. All sections of the thesis are archived on CD-ROM. The theses have been cataloged by Odum Library, Valdosta State University, and are available on Interlibrary Loan. Each student's Article Manuscript was submitted, reviewed, and accepted for publication in the *Action Research Exchange*, with editorial changes required in some cases. A select number of Literature Reviews are also included in *Action Research Exchange*.

Equally important to the work of the last two years is the ACTION that went on in the two years previous to the beginning of the online program. The design and evolution of the Valdosta State University Ed.S. (Education Specialist) in Instructional Technology program from the idea stage through the eventual implementation as a totally online program is described in detail in "From Bricks and Mortar to Clicks and Modems: The Redesign of a Graduate Program" in the 2001 *Educational Media and Technology Yearbook*. This article, co-written by the faculty of the Department of Curriculum and Instructional Technology, is instructive about the process and challenges of "homegrown" online program design and implementation. It is also inspiring as an

example of how faculty and students can work together to 'grow' a program. The full citation for this article is included at the end of this editorial.

## RESEARCH

Described in this premiere issue of the Action Research Exchange is a wide variety of RESEARCH, all conducted within and for the benefit of the educational organizations employing the authors. Nearly any practitioner in K-12 schools could find an article of interest and practical use here. All of the research focused on the use of instructional technology in the broad sense. The action researchers investigated the effects and experience of using computer software ranging in purpose from mathematics and reading skills building, to fostering of creativity, to learning English as a second language. They looked at instructional technology hardware such as interactive whiteboards, and the use of the WWW for instructional strategies such as WebQuests and for online course delivery. There were many media specialists in the group and their research adds to the literature in the areas of using technology to teach information literacy skills, evaluation of Internet sites, and Accelerated Reader implementation and training issues. The use of technology for administrative and student support in the areas of school counseling, parent involvement and communications and implementation of school policies were also investigated.

## EXCHANGE

As anyone who has participated in online instruction from either the student or the faculty position knows, there was a huge amount of EXCHANGE in the coursework and especially the thesis phase of this program. Countless numbers of e-mail messages and hours of time were spent in giving and acting upon electronic feedback in each of the four parts of the thesis. Nearly all of the collaborative work was done online, with an occasional telephone call initiated when needed. There was also EXCHANGE of ideas between and among faculty and students about what this journal would include, how it would look, and who would contribute. The resulting web design was done by a former M.Ed. Instructional Technology student, Mr. Wesley Force, and the journal will be edited on an ongoing basis by Dr. Lorraine Schmertzling with the assistance of Mr. Michael Black, editorial assistant. For at least the first year, submissions to the *Action Research Exchange* will be limited to manuscripts submitted by the Ed.S. students in partial fulfillment of program requirements. But we invite readers to join in the EXCHANGE by contacting the authors with questions or comments about their research, especially those who also have an interest in conducting research in their classrooms with the intent to improve learning. Each author has included an e-mail contact. We also invite you to write to us, the editorial board of the *Action Research Exchange*, with ideas for ways that we can improve the journal. This is new to us, but as has been proven throughout the development of the program and the journal, formative evaluation and feedback can improve any product or process.

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## References

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