DIGITAL LEARNING

Equity Analysis Project:

A Collaborative Self-Study and Implementation Exercise for Improved Equity-Centered Practices

everylearner
everywhere

Acknowledgements

Authors:

Sarah Straub, Associate Professor of Education Studies at Stephen F. Austin State University

Rachel Jumper, Associate Professor of Human Sciences at Stephen F. Austin State University

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About Every Learner Everywhere

Every Learner Everywhere is a network of partner organizations with expertise in evaluating, implementing, scaling, and measuring the efficacy of education technologies, curriculum and course design strategies, teaching practices, and support services that personalize instruction for students in blended and online learning environments. Our mission is to help institutions use new technology to innovate teaching and learning, with the ultimate goal of improving learning outcomes for Black, Latino, and Indigenous students, poverty-affected students, and first-generation students. Our collaborative work aims to advance equity in higher education centered on the transformation of postsecondary teaching and learning. We build capacity in colleges and universities to improve student outcomes with digital learning through direct technical assistance, timely resources and toolkits, and ongoing analysis of institutional practices and market trends. WCET (the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies) and WICHE (the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education) serve as the intermediary organizations for the Every Learner Everywhere Network. For more information about Every Learner Everywhere and its collaborative approach to equitize higher education through digital learning, visit everylearnereverywhere.org.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper describes the outcomes of a Digital Learning Equity Analysis project undertaken by two award-winning educators[1], Sarah Straub and Rachel Jumper, who sought to implement suggestions from the micro credential training hosted by Every Learner Everywhere. This training focused on promoting equity in digital learning and provided a structured protocol for conducting reviews of online courses. In Fall 2022, Straub received an email about a training to help with online teaching best practices. She signed up because she wanted to learn more about effective teaching in online spaces. Straub's university offered an Online Instructor Certification as well as the Interactive Video Certification through their Center for Teaching and Learning, but she was eager to see what could be learned for online instruction through an equity framework. As the program continued, she was heartened to discover that this was more than a dissemination of information; it was a multi-week undertaking with mentor meetings, discussions, and reflections. She dove deep into the Digital Learning Equity Framework and was inspired by the suggestions from the *Caring for Students Playbook* resources provided in the training. And yet, at the end of the training, she felt as if she needed more time to engage with the resources so as to apply them to her own courses. She communicated her desire to continue to engage with the course material in a structured way to one of the organizers who replied, "Sure… go for it. Let me know what you come up with." The following paper details the results of the evaluation of online courses following that conversation.

In an effort to review course content in a meaningful way, Straub recruited a second faculty member, Jumper, to also engage in the course review process and to work together through the *Caring for Students Handbook*. The researchers, Straub and Jumper, each selected one of their online courses to review and utilized the protocol provided in the training to analyze the course's alignment to data tools and potential biases. Straub selected her undergraduate MLGE 4230 course for middle-level social studies methodologies. This online course includes many nontraditional learners who are online completers and paraprofessionals beginning undergrad coursework after years in their professional positions. Jumper selected her graduate level introductory course in Human Sciences, HMSC 5300. This course focuses on helping new graduate students adjust to graduate level research, writing, and content. It is a fully online course, where almost all students work full time. In both scenarios, they were not teaching the traditional on campus SFA student. They worked to incorporate best practices from this training to better support their nontraditional learners. Following their analysis, the researchers presented their findings to each other and took immediate action to improve equity-centered practices for their respective courses.

In addition to documenting their experiences using the Digital Learning Equity Analysis protocol, this paper also outlines how the researchers modified the training for a peer feedback model that lasted six months. Through this modification, they aimed to extend the benefits of the training to a broader group of educators and improve equity-centered practices across multiple online courses.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT ＞ Both of these researchers are faculty within the James I. Perkins College of Education at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas. This university has a Center for Teaching and Learning that offers relevant and applicable professional development opportunities to their faculty throughout the year. The constant encouragement to pursue pedagogical growth in online learning spaces is a part of the campus culture and one that inspired both of these educators to engage in this collaborative experience.

[1] Sarah Straub is a Kinder Award for Excellence in Education winner and the Goldin Award for Teaching Excellence recipient for her teaching in Houston. She also was named the James I. Perkins College of Education Teaching Excellence recipient in 2023. Rachel Jumper is a two-time School of Human Sciences Teaching Excellence award winner and was named the James I. Perkins College of Education Teaching Excellence recipient for SFA in 2022.
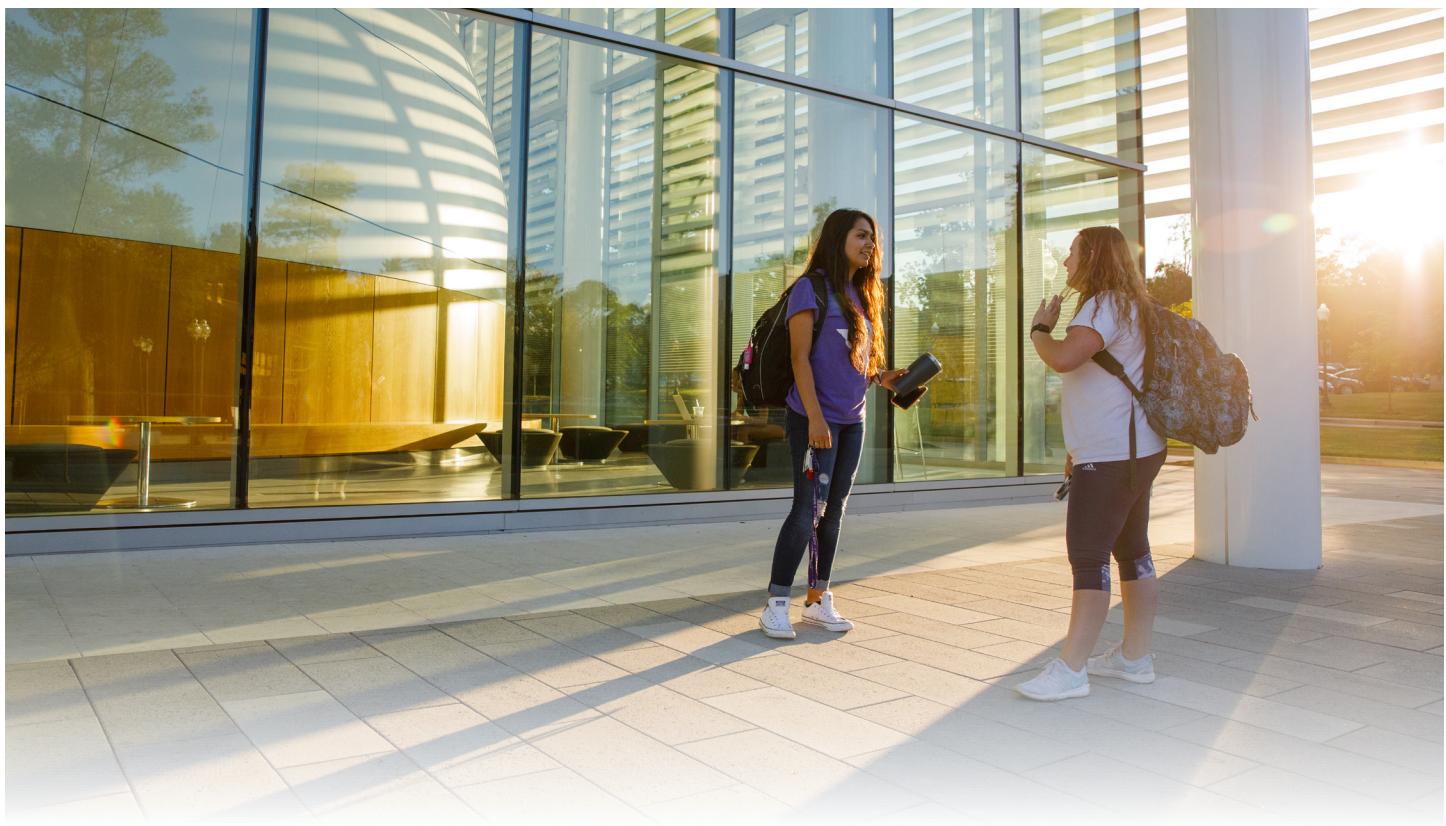
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To ground this collaborative study in the literature, it is important to understand the context in which the research took place as well as the theoretical basis for the project. Digital learning realities have been changing, perhaps slowly prior to the pandemic, but with an acceleration that has been challenging at best and impossible at worst for educators (Knight, 2022). This paper will begin by discussing these learning realities and the role that online teaching plays in navigating a pathway forward. This analysis of the learning landscape is based primarily on cognitive load theory, a theory that centers the students' experiences. After we review the context and theoretical basis for the research, we will discuss equity-centered practices for online learning. These equity-centered practices are grounded in culturally responsive teaching, a pedagogy of care, and an open education pedagogy. Each of these concepts will be considered below.

Digital Learning Realities

Online education has been around since 1989 with the University of Phoenix (Kentnor, 2015). In fact, in 2012, "69 percent of chief academic leaders indicated online learning was critical to their long-term strategy and, of the 20.6 million students enrolled in higher education, 6.7 million were enrolled in an online class" (Kentnor, 2015). And yet, despite a more than 30-year history, the digital learning landscape always seemed like some sort of theoretical future until the COVID-19 pandemic pushed the transition into high gear. Laufer et al. (2021) published a qualitative study on leadership perspectives on 85 higher education leaders in 24 countries to evaluate this rapid digital transformation. These researchers identified inequities at the individual, institutional, and system level for online education (Laufer et al., 2021).

In our home state of Texas, like much of the rest of the country, many institutions felt unprepared for the quick transition to online learning that the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated. The pandemic exposed gaps in faculty preparedness to teach in this modality (Watson, et al., 2022). Universities reacted differently to those gaps to support student learning (Laufer et al., 2021). Some universities, such as the University of North Texas, overhauled their curriculum (Allen, 2022). Others, like Texas A&M University, made smaller changes to their introductory courses (Knight, 2022). Within the home institution of the researchers, the changes were less uniform. Some courses returned face-to-face while others remained virtual, asynchronous. As with other institutions in the state, the Center for Teaching and Learning at Stephen F. Austin State University worked during the pandemic to support faculty that had little to no experience in delivering online courses.

Cognitive Load Theory

Cognitive load theory has been popularized in the field of educational psychology (Skulmowski & Xu, 2021). Cognitive load theory states that "extraneous cognitive load should be reduced to leave sufficient cognitive resources for the actual learning to take place" (Skulmowski & Xu, 2021, p. 171). In other words, cognitive load theory is a concept that explains how the human brain processes and manages information. It suggests that there is a limit to the amount of information a person can effectively process in their working memory at any given time. Exceeding this limit can lead to cognitive overload, making it difficult to learn or solve problems. In simpler terms, it's about how much mental effort it takes to learn or understand something, and the theory provides guidelines for designing instruction to minimize this mental effort for better learning outcomes. Sweller (2011) describes two main types of knowledge: primary and secondary. Primary knowledge is knowledge that we are biologically primed to learn without explicit instruction; for example, language (Sweller, 2011). But the applications of this theory are also beneficial in the fields of both Straub and Jumper: the training of pre-service teachers at the undergraduate level and the training of human sciences professionals at the graduate level. Secondary knowledge is knowledge that is "culturally important and needs to be acquired in order to function appropriately in society" (Sweller, 2011, p. 40). As humans gain secondary knowledge, they have to organize all that information in some meaningful way in their memory (Sweller, 2011). Organizing the information we learn means that we are faced with what Sweller (2011) calls "cognitive load." Sweller writes that cognitive load can be either intrinsic or extraneous. Intrinsic cognitive load refers to "the complexity of the knowledge that is being acquired without reference to how that knowledge is acquired" (Sweller, 2011, p. 57). Intrinsic cognitive load is fixed, meaning that the only way to change it is to change "what is learned or the levels of expertise of the learners" (Sweller, 2011, p. 57). When cognitive load is extraneous, instructors control the load that students are faced with and, therefore, can reduce cognitive load by changing their procedures and course design to make information more manageable for learners (Sweller, 2011). For example, giving students clear instructions on assignments and improving rubrics so expectations are clearly laid out reduces the cognitive load of the student having to discern what the instructor wants.

In online education, research using cognitive load theory has been used as a foundation for the development of innovative and unique instructional design of courses to best support learning (Sweller, 2011; Sweller, 2020). As we reviewed our courses as described in this manuscript, reducing the cognitive load for our students was one of our goals. As described in the *Caring For Students Playbook*, cognitive load can be supported by organizing course sites in easy to navigate formats, helping make connections to students' lives to see how all the pieces of course content fit together, and by breaking up content into smaller groups of information and then reinforcing that information through application or quizzes (Adams et al., 2021).

Equity-Centered Design Practices

Moving from the identified issue of cognitive load, we now seek to describe potential opportunities for equity-centered design practices. The training that inspired this collaborative self-study defines equity-centered design as the "practice of purposefully involving minoritized communities throughout a design process with the goal of allowing their voice to directly affect how the solution will address the inequity at hand" (Kwak, 2020). There are three core components that are detailed in the Every Learner Everywhere framework:

(1) Equity, (2) Anti-racism and (3) Human-centered design (Kwak, 2020).

As the researchers reviewed their classes, they felt that it was important that they also consider access as a component of equity as well. Stephen F. Austin State University is situated in a rural area, so access to these digital learning landscapes is a consideration that online faculty must consider. Research on access to internet and online education resources in rural locations at the secondary education level does acknowledge differences in infrastructure between rural and urban areas with rural areas often having less access to reliable internet (e.g. Valentine et al., 2019). One critical aspect of promoting equity in online learning spaces is the need for teachers to be aware of potential biases in digital learning platforms and to actively work to overcome them (Kimmons, 2017). For instance, some online platforms may be inaccessible to some students with limited access to technology.

Once these inequities are identified, it is imperative that systems, organizational structures, and policies change to mitigate the power imbalance. And, all of these equity practices are grounded in the concept of humanizing pedagogy. While Salazar (2013) worked to clarify this humanizing pedagogy for educators, it was actually first envisioned by Paulo Freire. A key tenet from this humanizing pedagogy that guided this research was that "humanization cannot be imposed on or imparted to the oppressed; but rather, it can only occur by engaging the oppressed in their liberation" (Freire, 1972 in Salazar, 2013, p. 126). What is explored in this manuscript is, indeed, just a first step. The data that the researchers collected as they engaged in reflective conversations with their students will continue to inform changes that can be made to better support and co-construct knowledge with the students they teach.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Equity and cultural responsiveness are important considerations in online learning spaces, and they can be achieved through the use of Culturally Relevant Teaching (CRT) approaches. According to Ladson-Billings (2014), CRT in online learning involves recognizing and valuing the diverse cultural backgrounds of students, connecting their experiences to classroom learning, and promoting positive cultural identities. Similarly, Geneva Gay (2010) emphasizes the importance of developing a commitment to equity and social justice in CRT, which is essential in creating an inclusive and culturally responsive online learning environment. To address these challenges,

Kimmons (2017) recommends using multiple modes of instruction and providing resources to support students who may face technology-related barriers. Research has shown that CRT in online learning spaces can positively impact student engagement and learning outcomes (Woodley, et. al. 2017). For example, the instructor must be intentional by validating students' pre-existing knowledge and purposeful opportunities for community-building through cohort-style activities and synchronous meetings. By adopting CRT in online learning environments, educators can create a more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment that values diversity and promotes equity and social justice.

Pedagogy of Care

The Pedagogy of Care is a critical approach to online teaching that emphasizes compassion, empathy, and support for students in online learning spaces. This pedagogy promotes a student-centered approach to teaching that prioritizes the wellbeing of the learner (Giroux, 2020). According to Freire (1998), Pedagogy of Care recognizes that learners have different needs, experiences, and backgrounds, and it is essential to create an environment that fosters a sense of community, trust, and respect.

Pedagogy of Care involves developing meaningful relationships with students and providing individualized support and feedback to help them succeed in online learning environments (Lowenthal & Hodges, 2015). This pedagogy encourages instructors to take an active role in fostering a positive and supportive online learning environment that values diversity and promotes equity and social justice (Giroux, 2020). To promote Pedagogy of Care in online learning spaces, it is essential to create opportunities for collaboration, peer feedback, and reflection, as these practices foster a sense of community and promote a supportive learning environment (Giroux, 2020). Research has shown that Pedagogy of Care can improve student engagement, academic achievement, and overall wellbeing in online learning spaces (Lowenthal & Hodges, 2015). By prioritizing the needs of students and fostering a sense of community and support in online learning spaces, instructors can create an inclusive and equitable learning environment that values the diversity of the learners.

Open Education Pedagogy

Open Education Pedagogy (OEP) is an approach to teaching and learning that emphasizes the use of open educational resources (OER) and the principles of open education to create collaborative and inclusive online learning environments (Wiley & Hilton III, 2018). OEP promotes the use of OER, which are educational materials that are freely available and can be used, shared, and modified by educators and learners (Hilton III et al., 2019). OEP also values the importance of collaboration, open access, and student-centered learning to promote equitable access to education.

OEP can be implemented in a variety of ways in online learning spaces, including the use of open textbooks, open course materials, and open educational practices (Wiley & Hilton III, 2018). Open textbooks, for example, are digital textbooks that are available for free and can be customized and adapted by educators to meet the needs of their learners (Hilton III et al., 2019). Open educational practices, on the other hand, involve the use of collaborative and student-centered teaching methods that promote active learning, critical thinking, and knowledge creation (Wiley & Hilton III, 2018).

Research has shown that OEP can positively impact student learning outcomes and increase student engagement and satisfaction in online learning environments (Hilton III et al., 2019).

OEP can also promote equity and social justice in education by making educational resources more accessible to students who may not have access to traditional educational materials due to financial or other barriers (Wiley et al., 2014). By embracing the principles of OEP in online learning spaces, educators can create more collaborative, inclusive, and equitable learning environments that value the diverse needs and experiences of their learners.

Culturally responsive teaching, pedagogy of care, and open education pedagogy are interconnected equity-centered design practices in education that collectively contribute to a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. These approaches can intersect in various ways, such as using culturally relevant open resources to make learning materials more accessible and relatable. We feel that, when combined, these practices create a holistic approach to equity-centered design, addressing students' cultural needs, emotional well-being, and access to educational resources, fostering a truly inclusive and equitable learning environment.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the present research was based on the Every Learner Everywhere *Caring For Students Playbook* (Adams et al., 2021). This playbook provides a variety of resources, checklists, and rubrics that can be used and adapted to review academic courses. There are many resources provided in the playbook and only select resources were used for the present review of coursework. The educators chose the resources that they thought would fit best with their current course design and format. The playbook describes six steps to review a course and the methods used for each of the six steps is outlined below. During their review of their coursework, Straub and Jumper met bi-weekly to discuss their course evaluation process and to compare results of their updates.

Syllabus

The first step in the peer review process is to review the course syllabus, which is a critical document that sets the tone for the course and provides students with essential information about the course content, expectations, and requirements (Posselt et al., 2020). As Posselt et al. (2020) outline, the syllabus is not just a contract of what the faculty will do, but a co-construction of the expectations of faculty as well as the student. Both researchers recognize the importance of the syllabus in promoting equity in digital learning environments and are fortunate to be provided with a syllabus template by their university college, which is required to be used by faculty each semester. This template serves as a helpful guide for ensuring that the syllabus contains essential elements such as accessibility statements and resources for students, which are reflective of current guidelines for promoting equity in digital learning. To review their syllabi, researchers in the present study used two different tools from the playbook, the Social Justice Syllabus Design Tool and the Universal Design for Learning Syllabus rubric which are described below.

Social Justice Syllabus Design Tool

Researchers used the Social Justice Syllabus Design Tool (SJSDT) developed by Taylor et al. (2019). The authors of the design tool developed it as a concrete tool that could be used to evaluate syllabi in higher education (Taylor et al., 2019). The purpose of the tool is to help faculty to create a more welcoming environment for underrepresented students (Taylor et al., 2019). The authors point out that underrepresented students often face a hostile campus climate, feelings of being invisible, a lack of faculty support, negative stereotypes, a fixed mindset and a lack of cultural relevance (Taylor et al., 2019). The SJSDT is a set of twenty questions that faculty can use to reflect on their syllabus to see if it focuses on relationship, community, and process. Jumper and Straub adapted this syllabus tool to include a pre-test/post-test design.

The syllabus tool focuses on areas that provide students with an introduction to the course and helps to change the narrative of the course from the very beginning. The design tool combines social justice theory with syllabi best practices to incorporate good design with social justice (Taylor et al., 2019). The researchers in this study chose the tool based on its grounding in theory and ability to help position the faculty member in the course and recognize their role in making their courses welcoming for underrepresented students. This isn't a data tool that yields statistically significant results. Rather, the researchers felt that it aligned with the pedagogy of care by ensuring that the syllabus is not a punitive measure.

Since both researchers wanted to improve their course and make their courses more welcoming for students, this tool was an ideal way to self-reflect and improve the student experience. In order to analyze their courses, each researcher chose one course for which to evaluate the syllabus. Each researcher self-analyzed their current syllabus using the SJSDT developed by Taylor et al. (2019). Syllabi were analyzed in both a pre-assessment and post-assessment.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Syllabus Rubric

The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Syllabus Rubric is a tool for evaluating and redesigning syllabi to promote accessibility and inclusivity in online courses (EnACT~PTD: Ensuring Access through Collaboration & Technology ~ Partnerships, Technology & Dissemination, 2022). It includes eleven areas of focus with the ability to self-rank at either

the Traditional, Enhanced, or Exemplary level. The present study began with pre-assessment results using the UDL syllabus rubric that were shared by the researchers in working sessions. Each researcher analyzed their course syllabus and discussed the areas in which they needed to improve based on the UDL Syllabus Rubric.

Using the two rubrics, the researchers engaged in a pre-assessment and post-assessment conversation to evaluate their syllabi and discuss changes. After the pre-assessment discussion, the syllabi were updated using a variety of best practice resources provided in the *Caring For Students Playbook*. Each researcher reviewed the playbook and chose the resources that best aligned with their teaching style and course layout. The researchers engaged in self-analysis for both the pre and post assessments using a Yes/No survey based on the Social Justice-Sustaining Diversity Tool (SJSDT). Following the self-analysis, the researchers came together to share their findings and engage in a professional learning community (PLC) protocol to receive feedback.

This part of the course review was conducted over a four-week period. In week 1, the researchers evaluated their current syllabi using the UDL Syllabus Rubric. In week 2, they redesigned their current syllabi for the Spring 2023 semester, incorporating best practices and recommendations from the pre-assessment discussion and self-analysis. In week 3, they evaluated the future syllabi using the UDL Syllabus Rubric. In week 4, they shared their evaluations and updates in the PLC, which provided an opportunity for peer feedback and further improvement. Overall, the methodology utilized a collaborative and iterative approach to redesigning syllabi that promotes accessibility and inclusivity in online courses.

Course Content

Course content needs to be evaluated for digital learning equity to ensure that all students have equal access to the learning material and resources regardless of their socioeconomic background. Digital learning has become an integral part of education, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is essential to acknowledge that not all students have access to the same technology, internet connectivity, or digital literacy skills (Allen, 2022). For example, course content may require a lot of bandwidth through the incorporation of elements such as video files and this disproportionately disadvantages rural students who may have unreliable internet connections or who may rely on mobile devices to access courses (Valentine, 2019). By evaluating the course content for digital learning equity, educators can identify and eliminate any barriers that may prevent certain students from fully engaging with the material (Knight, 2022). This can lead to a more inclusive and equitable learning environment where all students have an equal opportunity to succeed.

Peralta Equity Rubric

This section of the peer review process emphasized the importance of evaluating course content for digital learning equity to ensure equal access to learning materials for all students, regardless of their socio-economic background. According to a report by the National Center for Education Statistics (2020), about 14 percent of US households with children do not have access to high-speed internet, which can create a significant barrier to digital learning. It is essential to acknowledge and address the digital divide when designing course content for online learning.

The Peralta Equity Rubric is a useful tool for assessing the extent to which course content and delivery promote equity and inclusion in digital learning. As highlighted by Scott (2020), the rubric includes key areas such as providing explicit guidance on student resources and support, promoting diversity, inclusion, and representation, and encouraging discourse on these issues. By using this rubric, educators can identify areas for improvement and develop strategies to enhance the digital learning experience for all students (Scott, 2020). The review process involved analyzing courses as they were previously offered, with a focus on key areas such as acknowledging and addressing the digital divide, providing explicit guidance on student resources and support, and promoting diversity, inclusion, and representation. By using the Peralta Equity Rubric, researchers were able to identify areas for improvement and develop strategies to enhance the digital learning experience for all students, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Assessment

The third step of the course review process is to assess students with care. This recommendation requires the faculty to examine their assessments with an eye to ensuring that assessments are student focused and authentic. To this end, assessments should be aligned "to both outcomes and student care, incorporating diverse assessment types, and building a culture of feedback" (Adams et al., 2021). Assessment and feedback in the courses were evaluated using several tools from the playbook.

Assessment Analysis

To review the assessments in the courses, researchers used a tool from the Tuft Center for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT). The CELT provides a checklist on inclusive assessment, and while not a rubric, the checklist provides a general list of good assessment practices and considerations and enhancements to improve assessments in online courses ([Tufts Center for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching, n.d.](#)). Both researchers used this checklist to review inclusive assessment practices in their courses.

Feedback Analysis

An important part of assessment is feedback. To assess the feedback given in the courses, researchers used two of the lists provided in the playbook. The first list is from Fink (2003), which states that feedback should be frequent, immediate, discriminating, and loving. The second list is the Seven Principles of Formative Feedback from Juwah, et al. (2004):

1. **Facilitate the development of self-assessment (reflection in learning),**

2. **Encourage teacher and peer dialogue around learning,**

3. **Help clarify what good performance is,**

4. **Provide opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance,**

5. **Deliver high-quality information to students about their learning,**

6. **Encourage positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem,**

7. **Provide information to teachers that can be used to help shape their teaching (in Adams et al., 2021).**

While neither checklist is a formal rubric, both provide opportunities to check the assessments in the courses and to reflect on the types of assessments in the courses as well as the types of feedback being given to the students. Researchers used their review of their coursework using these two lists to discuss their feedback and provide examples during their bi-weekly meetings.

Communication Plans

To evaluate their effectiveness with regard to communication, the researchers needed to begin by creating an organizational framework. This tool was based on the best practices included in the *Caring For Students Playbook* and focused on the concept of Community of Inquiry (Fiock, 2020). Straub and Jumper developed a pre-test/post-test to evaluate communication opportunities such as the incorporation of a "getting to know you" survey, welcome video, open office hours plan, private office hours opportunities, small group opportunities as well as questions related to the Community of Inquiry (Fiock, 2020). This concept has two distinct components: (1) the community, and (2) the inquiry. After reviewing the combined framework of seven principles of good practice for the online environment and the Community of Inquiry presences outlined in Fiock (2020), researchers noticed the focus on clarity and connection as paramount and foundationally necessary before a course could move into true inquiry.

Community of Inquiry Rubric

To evaluate the community of inquiry, researchers created a pre- and post-survey similar to the syllabus protocol. This instrument had ten questions which were a mixture of absolute value responses (Yes/No), Likert-style questions and open-ended questions. Absolute value questions included if the course had evidence of a "Getting to Know You Survey", a "Welcome Letter or Video", various questions regarding accessibility of Office Hours for both individual and group needs, and "Weekly Module Overview Videos" or messages. The Likert-style and nominal questions focused on many activities that incorporated connectedness and let everyone's voices be heard such as a synchronous meeting in the first week to build community and a space for office hours with various group sizes.

Institutional Support

Institutional Support refers to any services that the campus provides to students. The traditional ones that are quick to identify are writing labs, student tutoring centers, mental and physical health supports, and references to policies that are relevant to students and their academic success, such as plagiarism and withheld grades (Adams et al., 2021). For the purpose of this self-study, the researchers reviewed their own preconceived notions of communicating institutional support through the lens of three questions outlined in the *Caring For Students Playbook*: (1) What support services are available inside and outside of the classroom for students at my institution? (2) How can I break down barriers to using support services? (3) How can I use institutionally supported technologies to connect and support my students? (Adams et al., 2021).

The first question did not require much review as the researchers work in a college that provides all faculty with a syllabus template that includes the relevant policies and the contact information for the applicable program initiatives like mental health offices. The second and third questions required more conversation and reflection. Researchers began their reflection by completing a simple pre- and post-chart to reflect on whether they were providing support to students in the five categories recommended by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education's (WICHE) Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET). WCET was founded by WICHE to address the need in distance learning to integrate academic services with online classes (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2022). It advocates for policy changes in the area of digital learning in higher education. WCET recommends five areas of support to share *and explain* to students: administrative, academic, communications, student community and personal services (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2022).

Self-Care

The Every Learner Everywhere Digital Learning Equity Framework offers self-care guiding questions in the *Caring For Students Playbook* for teachers (Adams et al., 2021). The researchers adapted these questions into a reflexive tool designed to help them assess their own self-care practices and identify areas where improvements may be needed. This self-care evaluation includes questions that cover areas such as work-life balance, stress management, and personal well-being (Adams et al., 2021). By completing this self-care evaluation, teachers can gain a better understanding of their own self-care habits and develop strategies to improve their overall well-being. This is an important aspect of digital learning equity, as teacher well-being and mental health can have a significant impact on the ability to effectively engage with and support students in online learning environments (Adams et al., 2021). Straub and Jumper engaged in this evaluation without preconceived expectations. Rather, they wished to see what takeaways would emerge. By promoting self-care practices and providing support for teacher well-being, institutions can help ensure that all students have access to high-quality digital learning experiences.

RESULTS

As discussed previously, the researchers for the present study used the Digital Equity Analysis playbook, *Caring For Students Playbook* (Adams et al., 2021), as a guide for the project. Together, the researchers reviewed their courses using each of the six recommendations outlined in the book to design a course and a teaching style that puts students first and demonstrates care and concern in all aspects of the course.

1. Reimagine Your Syllabus Content

The first step in the process was to "Reimagine Your Syllabus Content" (Adams et al., 2021). Researchers did this by engaging with the Social Justice Syllabus Design tool (Taylor et al., 2021). The researchers reformatted this tool as a Google Form where Straub and Jumper reviewed their specific syllabi independently before meeting to review the initial results. As stated previously, Straub selected MLGE 4230: Teaching Social Studies in Grades 4–8. The course is offered once per semester, and she is the only instructor to teach it. Middle level social studies is also her area of expertise. Jumper selected HUSC 5300: Philosophy of Human Sciences. This course is offered in a half-term format each semester. Jumper is the only instructor who teaches this course at the current time and is the program coordinator for the master's program in human sciences. The course is designed to be an introduction to the field and to graduate school.

Each researcher evaluated her course independently using the SJSDT. The tool consists of twenty questions, each answered with Yes or No. Full responses from both researchers can be found in Table 1. It should be noted that in Table 1, items 15 and 16 are shaded gray because the answers to these questions would indicate that a "Yes" is negative and a "No" is positive, whereas all other items would indicate the opposite. After reviewing the syllabi, the two researchers met and discussed their scores and offered examples and justifications for their SJSDT scores.

Table 1.

Social Justice Syllabus Design Tool

	MLGE 4230 (Pre)	MLGE 4230 (Post)	HUSC 5300 (Pre)	HUSC 5300 (Post)
1. **Relevance**: Does it tell students how/why the course content is relevant to their lives and to their future careers?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
2. **Social Justice Connection:** Does it tell students how course content or skills are used to improve the lives of individuals and/or communities? What are some of the social justice implications of the class?	No	Yes	No	Yes
3. **Mindset:** Is grading described in a way that is success-oriented rather than failure-oriented?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4. **Expectations of Success:** Are there low stakes assignments that allow students to practice new skills without much pressure?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
5. **Mindset:** Is there any language that suggests that the content/skills of the class are learned qualities rather than fixed skills?	No	Yes	No	Yes
6. **Student-Centered:** How are the assignments described? Is the rationale for each assignment clear, so that students understand why they are doing them?	No	Yes	No	Yes
7. **Social Justice; Belongingness:** Do some of the readings come from authors who are women and people with diverse ethnic backgrounds?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
8. **Social Justice; Relevance:** Have you included language from the ethical codes of your profession or statements about the social justice commitments of your field?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
9. **Warmth:** Do you use communal language ("we," "us") as opposed to individual language ("you" and "I")? Does the "we" language truly convey some egalitarianism or merely mask the power structure of the class?	No	Yes	No	Yes

10. **Student-Centered:** Is there language that validates the students' experiences and feelings of anxiety about the course and offers assurances of resources to support student learning?	No	Yes	No	Yes
11. **Student-Centered:** Does the wording convey that you are available to students as a resource?	No	Yes	No	Yes
12. **Student-Centered:** Do you provide links to resources that may support learning, such as videos, tutoring labs, study groups, etc.?	No	Yes	No	Yes
13. **Warmth:** Overall, does the syllabus have a warm and inviting tone?	No	Yes	No	Yes
14. **Belongingness:** Are there technical terms or jargon that the students may not yet have encountered in their classes? Have you defined them?	No	Yes	No	No
15. **Belongingness; Warmth:** Does the syllabus read like a legal document or legal contract? If so, are all the "rules" necessary?	Yes	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No
16. **Stereotype Threat:** Is there any language that might prompt comparisons about groups' ability levels, math skills, or other differences that might trigger stereotype threat?	No	No	No	No
17. **Power:** Do any of the assignments, readings, or topics on the schedule indicate how power and privilege are addressed in the class via readings, activities, topics? Is this part of the class description?	No	Yes	No	Yes
18. **Belongingness:** Do you have any guest speakers, films, or activities that offer students with role models who are like them?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
19. **Social Justice:** Does the syllabus describe a democratic classroom? e.g. do descriptions of activities and assignments offer any choice in topics or formats? Any discussion of negotiated rules?	No	Yes	No	Yes
20. **Warmth:** Does the syllabus reflect you—your passion for the topic, your own aesthetic style and language?	No	Yes	No	Yes

Excluding items 15 and 16, Straub articulated an overall negative outcome (n = 13) based on the SJSDT. Jumper also articulated an overall negative outcome (n = 15) based on the SJSDT. Of particular note for both syllabi on the pre-assessment was the demonstrated lack of warmth, articulation of mindset, and understanding of this document as a student-centered resource. Following the pre-test, the researchers "reimagined" their syllabus content using the concepts from the *Caring For Students Playbook* (Adams et al., 2021) and then reevaluated it based on the same SJSDT rubric used for the pre-assessment. Following the updates, both researchers scored significantly more positively on the tool, with Straub having an overall positive outcome (n = 20) and Jumper also having an overall positive outcome (n = 19).

In the discussion after the pre-assessment, both researchers expressed that the syllabus was primarily a "throwaway" document that is based on a college level template that all faculty are required to use. With the focus of the syllabi being about the use of the template, researchers felt that both pre-assessment syllabi read more as compliance focused (meeting the requirements of the college), rather than student focused (based on the SJSDT). After reviewing the syllabi, both researchers recognized the importance of making the syllabus more student-focused and welcoming. Both researchers discussed the fact that the syllabus is a public-facing and posted document, where students could review the course prior to enrolling and see if faculty are student or compliance focused. This incentivized both researchers to make their syllabi more student and social justice focused.

Because a syllabus is a relatively brief document, the two researchers discussed the usefulness of the interactive syllabus design from the University of Arizona's Digital Learning team, described as "...like a front page of an entire website devoted to the course with all the course requirements and content being easily accessed from that page" in the *Caring For Students Playbook* (Adams et al., 2021). This format would allow for more information to be broken down into separate pages in the online course, so that students can more quickly find information due to the fact that an interactive syllabus provides links for students to easily access the information they need (Adams et al., 2021).

As the researchers discussed their pre-assessment syllabi based on the SJSDT, Straub expressed that she struggled with the text for the course, which is written from one narrative perspective (white male), but recognized that it is cost efficient and published by American Association for Middle Level Educators, which gives it legitimacy. Additionally, using journal articles which could provide space for more diverse representation of perspectives would be less accessible for students. The text for Jumper's course is a newer book, not a traditional text, which covers topics that include diverse populations that are often left out of other texts about the field. In addition, readings in the course are selected to include various populations. However, none of this information was reflected in the syllabus.

The researchers also discussed the learning outcomes of the pre-assessment syllabi and Jumper especially felt that the syllabus for the course had a feeling of enforcing rules rather than welcoming and orienting students to the course. Reviewing the syllabus with the SJSDT allowed Jumper to recognize some of the areas where she could change the narrative to be more positive for the post-assessment syllabus and update the language to be more inclusive and welcoming. The researchers also reflected on where information was in the syllabus and moved information that was student focused and supportive to the beginning of the syllabus from the end. Jumper also added a visual grade representation to her post-assessment syllabus and a personal Bitmoji to distinguish what was mandated for the syllabus by our university and what was personal or course specific information. Syllabi that are more visually appealing have been found to be more engaging for students (Ludy et al., 2016), and it is the hope of the researchers that these changes will make the syllabi for the two courses evaluated as more appealing for students.

Overall, the biggest take-away from reviewing the syllabi was that the process energized the researchers to make significant revisions. Both the researchers were excited to update the syllabi to focus on the students and to be more welcoming. After the syllabus review, the researchers feel that the documents now create a type of space in which both researchers are excited to teach and students will be eager to learn.

2. Review and Revise Course Content

The second recommendation in the *Caring For Students Playbook* is to review and revise course content (Adams et al., 2021). The purpose of this review is to "make sure all students can engage with and feel supported by your content" (Adams et al., 2021, pg. 16). Three main questions drove this section: (1) Are all students able to engage with the course content? (2) Do students see themselves reflected in the course? and (3) Am I providing content to my students in a way that supports their learning (Adams et al., 2021)? To analyze the course content alignment to universal learning design methods and digital equity, Straub and Jumper reviewed the previous iteration of their respective courses as well as the updated course for spring 2023 using the Peralta Online Equity Rubric (POER). The Peralta Online Equity Rubric is designed to help online teachers evaluate their courses to make them more equitable for all students (Stark & Kelly, 2019). This is done by assessing the access students have to technology, being specific about bias, increasing the faculty members' commitment to inclusion, and following universal design principles in the course (Stark & Kelly, 2019). Researchers used the POER to assess their courses prior to revising and then after revising.

Pre-Review Assessment and Course (Re)design

For Straub, the pre-review of the course using the POER resulted in scores of "incomplete" for elements E1: technology; E2: student resources and support; E5: images and representation; E7: content meaning; and E8: connection and belonging. Elements E3: universal design for learning (UDL), E4: diversity and inclusion, and E6: human bias were scored at "aligned." For Jumper, the pre-review assessment scores of incomplete were given for elements E3: universal design for learning (UDL) and E5: images and representation. Scores of "aligned" were given for elements E1: technology; E4: diversity and inclusion; E6: human bias; E7: content and meaning; and E8: connection and belonging. Finally, element E2: student resources and support was scored as having "additional exemplary elements." Following the pre-review assessment, each researcher updated their course.

Straub reviewed the POER elements to systematically make changes and adjustments to the course being (re)designed. Straub added information from a variety of online education tools, so that students in the course, who are pre-service teachers, could practice with and reflect on whether they liked these technologies and reflect how accessible these tools would be for students in their own future classrooms. These online tools expose students in the course to a variety of technologies. Straub also added a video to the class to help connect students with the library resources on campus. To address UDL, Straub included a "getting to know you survey" in the course and included explanations for why she was asking the students certain questions and specifically mentioned UDL. Each week students were allowed to submit reflections in a variety of ways including videos or reflections. In addition, Straub added videos to weekly news items in the course. Straub also addressed how images and reflections in education are often white-centric and included diverse images in her course. One of Straub's strengths per the POER is the sense of community fostered in her online classes. This sense of community is built through book club meetings and one-on-one midterm meetings with students, which the researcher will continue.

For Jumper, the main change that was incorporated based on the POER in her class was the implementation of weekly Zoom sessions. In these Zoom sessions, the current students engage with former students. This addresses multiple areas of the POER, including creating a community of belonging and a purposive inclusion of diverse speakers. Additionally, one of the weekly Zoom sessions explicitly shows students how to access resources, including mental health supports, on campus (E2).

To focus on an acknowledgement and analysis of bias, Jumper modified her reaction papers to include a disclosure on who the author is and what biases might be present in the chapters. The author of the textbook focuses on how persons of color are included in the field, which is representative of the student population enrolled in the course. Based on these updates, the researcher observed that the student reactions became more nuanced with regard to the complexity of the analysis. An interesting discussion addressed how this particular field has been historically viewed as anti-feminist. This controversial topic was not previously addressed by students.

One of the most fundamental pivots for building community was to reframe how Jumper had previously addressed student writing that was not at a level perceived to be acceptable. In previous years, these conversations about "writing gaps" were central to the discourse. With the revision, the "gap" was reframed in a more asset-minded approach, in which opportunities for learning and improving skills replaced grade punitive conversations.

Post-Review Assessment

Researchers did a post-review assessment using the POER, and both researchers scored their courses higher following the (re)design of their course. After the course review, Straub scored elements E1: technology, E2: student resources and support, and E5: images and representation as "aligned" and elements E3: universal design for learning (UDL), E4: diversity and inclusion, E6: human bias, E7: content meaning, and E8: connection and belonging as having "additional exemplary elements". There were new elements to the course that engaged students on deeper levels including even more varied learning experiences with a reflection process that aligned to both social studies best practices and to the consideration of lesson planning elements.

Jumper also scored slightly higher on the post-review rubric, with elements E1: technology, E2: resources and support, E6: human bias, and E8: connection and belonging scored as having "additional exemplary elements". A rubric score of "aligned" was assigned to elements E3: universal design for learning (UDL), E4: diversity and inclusion, and E7: content meaning. Jumper felt that element E5: images and representation was still incomplete for the course, but few images are used in the course content or readings. This is an area that Jumper will continue to develop for future semesters. Both researchers have found that their courses improved according to almost all rubric elements following the review and that the changes led to more diversity, more recognition of access to technology, and more activities to foster a sense of community and belonging in the courses.

3. Assess Your Students With Care

The third step of the course review process is to assess your students with care. Straub and Jumper evaluated their assessments using the three driving questions outlined by Adams et al. (2021) and the Tuft CELT inclusive assessment chart. Both researchers found that they had fairly inclusive assessment practices based on the CELT inclusive assessment chart and included elements of each area addressed on the chart. These elements included describing how students would be evaluated and work would be weighted, listing all assignments in the course, using diverse assignment types, having many assignments, listing dates assignments are due, and pulling exam questions from a variety of sources (course readings, discussions, etc.) and using diverse names or examples on exams.

For Straub, with regard to providing multiple ways for students to demonstrate their knowledge during the course, the course utilized varied and diverse Dropbox assignments. For example, she included a Janus-figure assignment, in which students identified an individual from the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills and then researched both positive and controversial details about that individual before ultimately writing a middle-school appropriate thesis statement on whether the individual should continue to be regarded as a "hero." However, the course lacked a cohesive theory-aligned reflection component. In terms of providing opportunities for students to reflect on their learning with the use of assessments, there is not much more than a reflection asking the student if they enjoyed the assignment, could envision themself implementing it, and if there were any revisions they would make. Finally, the course used weekly assignment grading practices as an opportunity to provide students with feedback on their learning. There would be a generic statement that could be copied and pasted for each learner and then an additional sentence or two to demonstrate to the student that Straub had actually read that individual assignment. Additionally, there was a requirement for at least one face-to-face collaborative meeting, which served as another opportunity for feedback and discussion.

Jumper had yes responses to the questions, "Do students have multiple ways to demonstrate their knowledge during the course?" and "Does the course provide students with opportunities to reflect on their learning with the use of assessments?" The course allows students to demonstrate knowledge through discussions, worksheet exercises, and the development of a variety of products. These products are both low- and high-stakes assignments including papers, annotated bibliographies, and more creative low-stakes projects like posting on social media about their favorite theorist and drawing their own family structure. In the class, students are asked to reflect on what they have learned that they did not know before and on what they still have questions about. When reflecting on strategies used to provide feedback, Jumper used two primary ways to give feedback: notes in the feedback section of the online learning platform, and through tracked changes in Microsoft Word documents for papers. Feedback in Jumper's course aligned with the FIDeLity model (Fink, 2003) that is outlined in the playbook. In this format, feedback is frequent and is given no later than one week from when the work is submitted (often sooner, but larger projects take more time). It is also immediate, it is discriminating through the use of clearly outlined rubrics, and it is loving (empathetic). Jumper felt that her quick responses to students and always addressing students by name or with specifics from their work allows students to feel a personal connection with the feedback and to see it more positively. In the future, Jumper will work to improve assessments in her courses by providing feedback through videos to add an even more personal touch.

4. Develop and Enact a Communication Plan

For both Straub and Jumper, communication was a strength that had been identified in various course evaluations over the years. The researchers were accessible during office hours and clear in their course structure. However, the survey instrument yielded opportunities for growth. Straub and Jumper each developed a communication plan that supports meaningful student engagement.

Straub Communication Plan

- ***Getting to Know You Quiz.*** *Working with Jumper and reviewing the literature, Straub asked targeted questions to better support her learners. Also using a best practice from Jumper, Straub took these responses and created reminders, so that she could reach out to students proactively to wish them luck on life events like childbirth, major surgeries, or big tests.*

- ***Weekly Online Meetings.*** *In previous course offerings, Straub relied on typed messages. While this is sufficient, for the purpose of personal growth as an online educator, Straub committed to creating weekly videos that last less than five minutes. These videos will have images to support, closed captioning, and a summary paragraph accompanying it for people who may not have strong internet connections and for which streaming is more difficult.*

- ***Creating a Community of Inquiry.*** *Another slight modification for Straub was a greater degree of intentionality when it comes to the community of inquiry. She provided more structure on the types of questions and interactions that she is looking for with each group in their Book Clubs and with the one-on-one meeting interactions during midterm and subsequent office hour sessions. Before the first book club, simple guidelines on active listening, examples of community-building and questioning strategies will be included.*

- ***Professor Talks.*** *Finally, as noted previously, Straub worked to enhance her course offerings with professor videos. This was done with Weekly Module Overviews but also included an optional welcome orientation at the beginning of the spring semester. This meeting was optional because, as an asynchronous online course, synchronous meetings should not be mandated. A recording and invitation for follow up was shared after the meeting with all students.*

- ***Clear Options for Multiple Ways to Engage in Office Hours.*** *The biggest strength for Straub is her office hours. During spring semester 2020, Straub transitioned to Calendly, which creates greater flexibility for students to engage with the teacher as it opens up "Office Hours" to all of the free time found on her connected calendar. A free version allows for students to schedule 15-minute meetings and, for a small fee, a professor can add additional options like 30-minute meetings and easier group conferencing spaces. Calendly is linked to the professional calendar and so any openings throughout the day when the professor is not in meetings are available for students. This means that the professor can meet with students as early as 8:00 AM all through to the end of the day at 5:00 PM. Some professors might choose to extend this time into the evenings, but this professor has elected not to, in order to explicitly model boundaries for the pre-service teachers.*

Jumper Communication Plan

Jumper had several strategies for communication already in place like the "Getting to Know You" survey which students complete. She downloads the survey responses and then, based on their responses, saves dates in her calendar to follow up or check in with students. In addition, Jumper does weekly videos in which she goes over assignments and shares updates and stories about what she is doing to make students feel like they get to know her better throughout the semester. Despite existing strengths to her communication, as a result of the review of communication practices and discussions with Straub, Jumper decided she wanted to improve office hour access and synchronous meeting opportunities for students.

- **Office hours.** *Although Jumper did keep her set office hours, she incorporated a requirement for students to schedule one meeting during the semester using Calendly to check in. Using Calendly allowed them to schedule their meetings based on their availability.*

- **Synchronous class meetings.** *Jumper also incorporated a series of weekly synchronous meetings. These meetings occurred either during the lunch hour or after 5:00 PM CST to encourage those students who worked to attend. Various topics relevant to the course were covered, and all meetings were recorded and posted in the course. While attendance was not as strong as Jumper had hoped and ranged from 1 out of 15 students to 4 out of 15 students at the synchronous meetings, an end-of-semester survey showed that, overall, students reported that the meetings were helpful and recommended that they be continued.*

5. Integrate Institutional Supports

Immediately, the results of our survey were alarming. Straub and Jumper were able to answer that they had briefly addressed only one—personal services—and only within the syllabus. Further review of the researchers' courses and the *Caring For Students Handbook* (Adams et al., 2021) showed that while the syllabus template provided by the researchers' college had links to campus resources, these were not truly student focused or comprehensive. To address this, the researchers developed a list of resources available for students on campus. The researchers then reached out to the Dean of the College of Education and asked for approval to request information from these departments to develop a module to be used in the two revised courses and potentially as a template for all classes in the college.

In keeping with the suggestion to "collaborate with institutional colleagues" (Adams et al., 2021), following approval from the Dean, Straub sent an email to the director or staff contact for each institutional office. This email asked each department to provide a short overview video or other informational materials that could be posted in a Brightspace module. Contacts for each office were asked to upload their documents into a shared drive, so that researchers could access the materials and build the course module.

This process is still in progress, but many offices on campus have responded and the researchers are excited to have a plan in place for the "what to do later" step of the review process. The researchers are optimistic that this module will be a great resource for students and break down barriers to support services, as outlined by Adams et al. (2021), by educating not only the students but also the faculty about the myriad services offered by Stephen F. Austin State University. In addition, the researchers have encouraged the campus offices to record videos so that students can put faces with the offices. While not all offices contacted have been able to provide resources, the researchers do feel that enough have been willing to help that students will get a more robust overview of services than previously.

6. Take Time for Self-Care

The final step in the *Caring For Students Handbook* emphasizes the importance of self-care for faculty members to better serve their students (Adams et al., 2021). Both researchers acknowledged the significance of this step and engaged in self-analysis to assess their self-care practices, which involved making a list of what is working and not working, reflecting on personal learning networks, and setting personal boundaries. To facilitate this process, Straub created a document tool that included driving questions to aid in the reflection process. After completing the reflective worksheet, the researchers met to discuss their narratives, and both agreed that self-care and boundaries were crucial for teachers to maintain their emotional well-being.

Straub reflected on her own self-care practices, highlighting her ability to set clear boundaries and carve out time for grading and interacting with like-minded colleagues in professional organizations and the campus Center for Teaching and Learning. She also emphasized the importance of intentional friendships in the workplace. Both researchers acknowledged that the project had resulted in a new friendship between them, with Straub stating that working on the Digital Learning Equity Analysis project with Jumper had led to a new friendship, and Jumper expressing gratitude for the opportunity to present with Straub at the campus Center for Teaching and Learning. The researchers' reflections illustrate the importance of self-care practices, the benefits of engaging in self-analysis, and the significance of personal relationships in the workplace. For additional context, Straub has been able to work remotely since the start of the global pandemic and has flourished in a remote teaching environment, noting she has been able to engage more with her family and has more time for self-care.

After her reflection, Jumper felt that her biggest challenge was boundary setting. The authors of the playbook wrote that "This recommendation of owning your space is perhaps the hardest of the three to practice" (Adams et al., 2021, p. 47), and Jumper found this to be true through her reflections. Due to the nature of online classes, it can be difficult to set clear boundaries for when work starts and stops. Jumper reflected that, "My program is 100 percent online, and so the space that I've had to carve out is that there is no time boundary on teaching. It runs 24/7. I put in my syllabus that I have a 24-hour email response time (I'm usually faster), but I have allowed myself to not answer emails after about 6:00 or 7:00 at night and leave them until the next day. This has been huge for me allowing myself to take a little break." Jumper did reflect that since she was granted tenure, she did feel more freedom to, in theory, say no to service requests. However, in practice, she has not really said no to service. She also recognizes that tenure is not a protection that many of her colleagues have, and all faculty must be helped with boundary setting. Jumper also reflected on the personal difficulties she had faced the previous year with failed fertility treatments and the death of her mother. Through difficult personal times, self-care and boundaries become even more important, and "owning your space" is essential in order to not sacrifice your own health and well-being.
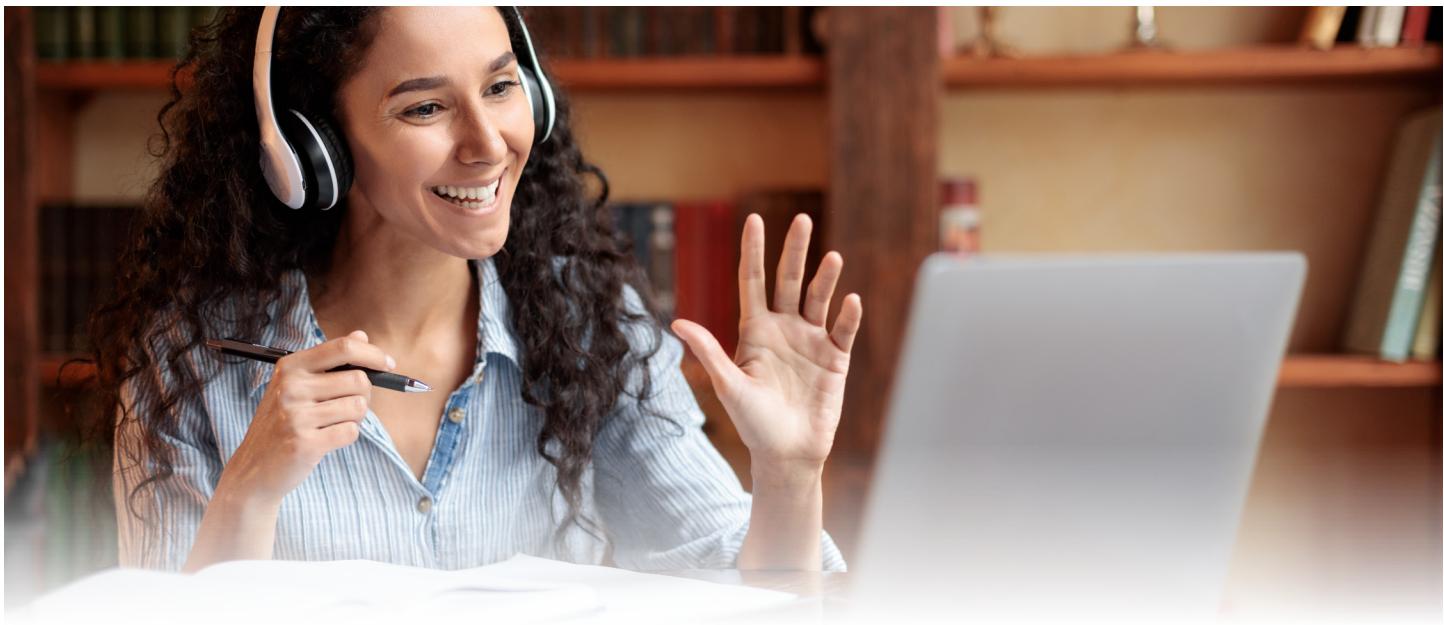
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Digital Learning Equity Analysis project undertaken by Straub and Jumper demonstrates the effectiveness of utilizing a structured protocol to analyze online courses for alignment to data tools and potential biases. This experience has not only provided valuable insights into improving equity-centered practices but also sparked excitement in teaching, reinvigorating the researchers' passion for promoting equity and inclusivity in their courses. The project highlights the importance of actively promoting equity in digital learning and provides a valuable model for other educators seeking to improve equity-centered practices in their own courses.

By participating in the Every Learner Everywhere micro credential training and by modifying it for a peer feedback model, the researchers were able to extend the benefits of the training to a broader group of educators and promote a culture of continuous improvement. The project's success underscores the importance of ongoing professional development opportunities for educators in digital learning environments. With the rapid shift to online learning in recent years, it is essential that educators are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to promote equity and inclusivity in their courses. The Digital Learning Equity Analysis protocol and the modified peer feedback model serve as valuable tools for educators seeking to improve their own courses and promote equitable practices.

Looking to the future, the Digital Learning Equity Analysis project has inspired Straub and Jumper to continue their efforts to promote equity in digital learning environments. As part of their ongoing commitment to this work, the researchers have set two specific goals. Firstly, they hope to complete the Institutional Supports module in their LMS, which will provide additional resources and support to educators seeking to promote equity in their courses. Secondly, they aim to provide a cohort model professional development program within Stephen F. Austin State University for other educators interested in learning more about digital learning equity frameworks.

Through these efforts, Straub and Jumper hope to extend the benefits of their project beyond their own courses and promote a culture of equity and inclusivity throughout their institution. By providing ongoing support and professional development opportunities, they aim to create a community of educators committed to promoting equity in all aspects of digital learning. The researchers believe that this work is essential for creating a more equitable and inclusive educational system, and are committed to continuing their efforts in this area, spurred on by the excitement and passion generated by their project.

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