

MOOCs as Collaborative Tools to Support Teacher Learning

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Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have been drawing increasing attention from states, district leaders, school administrators and teachers in the USA, who are increasingly considering MOOCs as a means of delivery for teacher professional development. This has become especially the case with the advent of the new educational reforms, and in particular the implementation of the Common Core States Standards. Enthusiasm for using MOOCs as teacher learning tool is predicated on the promise of high-quality, research-based courses developed directly by experts in prominent universities which are almost infinitely scalable at low cost; doubts and cautions are usually concerned with whether the MOOC as a format is legitimate, rigorous and interactive enough for improving teacher teaching and student learning.

In October 2013, the Understanding Language team at Stanford University launched its first MOOC, *Constructive Classroom Conversations: Mastering Language for the Common Core State Standards*. The course was successful in many ways. Over 9,000 educators registered; around 2,000 participants actively engaged with the course content and with peers; and approximately 2,500 samples of student discourse were submitted. Although our course had comparatively fewer enrollments vis-à-vis massively-subscribed MOOCs, the majority of our participants were dedicated and committed professionals, and this was reflected in a very high completion rate. 86% of our participants reported that they were satisfied with the course and 76% felt prepared to change their instructional practice based on what they had learned.

Throughout this process, our team has been fully committed to applying sound instructional practices to the design and delivery of our courses, in order to maximize participant learning. This presentation will focus on the design principles, related research and collaborations we have undertaken in our MOOCs and beyond. It will also describe some of the challenges and difficulties we have faced, and how we have responded to them.