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FROM EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO CRITICAL TRANSFORMATION: ONLINE LEARNING IN A TIME OF FLUX

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As the novel coronavirus spread across the United States, educators at all schooling levels and institutions rapidly pivoted from face-to-face instruction in predominantly physical classrooms to entirely remote and online instruction, a process many have referred to as *emergency remote teaching* or ERT (Hodges et al., 2020). With the primary intention of maintaining some degree of continuity in students' learning, ERT has prioritized providing learners with remote access to existing instructional content, structures, and support. Thus, educators, individual schools, and education systems using ERT have turned to technologies that are believed to be widely available and accessible to students, with networked digital technologies constituting the primary mode of instruction. This has often been justified under the assumption that ERT is intended to be a temporary process that briefly establishes continuity in students' learning and lives amidst tumultuous circumstances by facilitating access to existing curriculum to the fullest extent possible.

Although these intentions and practices have helped fulfill essential educational functions while providing some students with stability, many obstacles have complicated ERT's effectiveness in the United States in the current moment, with two in particular causing significant challenges. First, by focusing on continuity of existing schooling curriculum and structures, current ERT interventions have in many ways inadvertently sustained some of the most inequitable aspects of formal education. For example, as many higher education institutions have transitioned to online learning, they have oriented their platforms and online activities around instrumentalist views of learning and education (Morris, 2020). This means that many online learning environments have been modeled on largely behaviorist approaches to education that shape knowledge into packets of content like pre-recorded lectures, rely on assessments that focus on quantifiable measures almost exclusively, and significantly constrain student autonomy through various surveillance measures and strict parameters for their participation (Morris, 2020). Consequently, while the emphasis on continuity has sustained some familiar curricular content and activities, it has also often maintained inequitable power dynamics that typically position students as passive recipients of commodified knowledge rather than active participants in their own knowledge construction.

Second, the widespread prioritization of online learning modes for delivering instruction risks exacerbating widespread and well-documented digital divides. Much has already been said regarding students' access to networked hardware both before and after the pandemic (Warschauer & Tate, 2018), and many schools and systems have adapted their delivery modes for instruction to address the access divide through methods such as delivering packets of worksheets in the mail or using school buses as mobile wi-fi hubs (Matisse, 2020). However, a more pervasive divide, one already present in formal online and hybrid learning contexts prior to the widespread school closures, has been how certain uses of digital technologies that reflect the discourses, literacy practices, and material realities predominant in white, upper class social networks already privileged by education policies and institutions, such as the use of personal computers and the exclusion of smartphones, obligating students to broadcast video from their homes during video conferences that at times last for multiple hours, and the presumption of indefinite access to stable internet connections (boyd, 2013; Kajee & Bafour, 2011; Khalid & Pedersen, 2016; Noonoo, 2020; Warshcauer & Tate, 2018). Thus, despite some instances of adjustment in the delivery modes for instruction, most schools and many educators continue to privilege particular ways of using technologies that align with the instrumentalist orientation to education.

Although ERT may have been intended as a temporary measure, policy makers and education leaders are beginning to accept that the pandemic is unlikely to dissipate in the near future and that schools and education systems will likely need to adopt variations of remote and hybrid teaching for an extended period of time. As educators subjected to this pivot from a temporary emergency response to the indefinite implementation of new modalities and environments for learning, we must also develop approaches that can address the inequities sustained by prior ERT methods and their emphasis on sustaining continuity. In many ways, the work of critical digital pedagogy scholars Sean Morris (2017) and Jesse Stommel (2014) and Sharon Ravitch's work on flux pedagogy (2020) offer focused approaches and theories of action that can help us work toward these intentions in this moment right now. Most notably, they all argue that the frameworks of critical pedagogy, critical literacies, and inquiry-as-stance are vital to helping us create spaces where students can develop the critical consciousness they need to productively grapple with the inequities in their lives as they are exacerbated by current social and pandemic issues. Additionally, they all call for enacting the principles of emergent design in our learning environments to allow for the flexibility needed to respond to our shared "moment of collective trauma" (Ravitch, 2020, para. 18) and our students' rapidly shifting needs, realities, and concerns. By adopting these approaches, these thought leaders contend that we can transform our educational space to actively resist the

reproduction of current social orders and craft new possibilities for our students' lives.

In order to achieve these intentions during this extended pivot to indefinite spaces for online and remote learning, I contend that the principles of critical pedagogies must be immediately and continually leveraged as we engage with the digital tools and platforms constituting our educational environments. As discussed by Ravitch (2020) and Stommel (2014), educators can create environments for such activity by centering class collaborations and inquiry projects that address students' interests and communities beyond the boundaries of the classroom (Morris, 2017). However, I further argue that interweaving the practices and orientations recommended by critical digital literacies researchers (Ávila & Pandya, 2013; Mirra et al., 2018; Pangrazio, 2016) can help us design online learning spaces in which educators and learners collectively develop a critical consciousness of the ideologies, power dynamics, and constraints embedded in the very tools we use and that are often imposed on our learning spaces.

Doing so requires moving away from an exclusive emphasis on fluency with the digital tools of the learning space, which often positions digital platforms as neutral mediums for learning. Instead, educators can begin to cultivate and ultimately redirect students' critical consciousness toward the ways in which certain modes of participation and communication, particularly textual and monolingual forms, become privileged by the platform's parameters. For example, students and teachers can collectively review the features of aplatform's discussion board on a platform with the intent of identifying which forms of expression are readily accessible and which are excluded, followed by a dialogue relating the tool's features to dominant paradigms in schools and education policies to encourage reflection on why these may have prompted the platform's developers to exclude certain forms of expression.

In addition to analyzing platforms and other mediums used for instruction, developing critical digital literacies within our pedagogical approaches also requires centering students' experiences by connecting the activity in their online learning spaces to both how they use digital technologies in their lives beyond their schools and in their lived worlds in ways that transgress the boundaries of digital spaces more broadly. Such activities can include designing visualizations of the networks they connect with when using different platforms, focusing in particular on who's included and excluded from these interactions (Pangrazio, 2016). Educators can also structure regenring activities (English, 2011) through which expressions developed using one platform's tools are reworked into different modes and genres to more clearly identify which modes of expression have been excluded and begin considering why this may have occurred.

As students and teachers cultivate their critical consciousness through these activities, they can then move toward re-articulating the possibilities and boundaries of their online educational spaces. These efforts can begin with producing digital compositions that express counter-narratives and marginalized voices excluded by the technologies we use. Although many of us as educators may be familiar with activities that can address these intentions such as critical remixing and restorying (Burwell, 2013; Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016), it is equally if not more important to facilitate opportunities for circulating students' work "across overlapping ecologies of home, school, peer, and digital environments" (Mirra et al., 2018, p. 16) through the use of any available means of distribution, online and otherwise. In many cases, this may be as straightforward as asking students to share their work in more widely accessible online spaces, such as blog sites and familiar social media platforms. However, alternative approaches could include more directly engaging with the intended audiences and communities students are composing for, such as through the development of infographics or pamphlets that can be distributed by organizations in students' communities. Regardless of the mode of distribution, such activities can help students continue refining their critical consciousness in our learning spaces by prompting collaborative reflections on the ways in which their selected modes for their compositions and tools for circulation make space for and exclude particular audiences, thus reflecting particular intentions underlying the development and use of these technologies (Mirra et al., 2018). Through such processes, students and teachers can collectively expand the boundaries of their learning platforms, connecting their activity with networks, spaces, and experiences that transcend the schooling context.

Teachers' efforts to center critical digital literacies and the orientations of critical digital and flux pedagogies in this era of highly regulated educational technology use is hopeful but also likely to encounter obstacles and challenges in implementation. Beyond the institutional restrictions many of us are likely to encounter when using learning management systems and other platforms, our various ideologies and experiences regarding digital tools and online platforms, particularly in terms of how both can be seen as distinct from schooling, can exert a powerful influence on how teachers and students take up the pivot to long-term online learning, making efforts to cultivate digital literacies complicated and likely contentious. However, and importantly, such processes can ultimately help educators and students defamiliarize themselves with their existing perceptions of dominant digital technologies, a necessary step that can help educators more readily redesign imposed online learning spaces in ways that are student-centered and promote the values of agency, invention, and critical consciousness. In doing so, teachers can facilitate opportunities for students to "forge their own path to authority" (Ávila & Pandya, 2013, p. 6) and rework imposed online tools in ways that respond to their interests, reflect their lives, and transform their learning into a more equitable experience.

Orientations of Critical Digital Literacies for Transforming Online Learning			
Orientation	Understanding	Connecting	Circulating
Classroom Practices	Shared learning and experimentation with platforms and tools, focusing on affordances and constraints of the privileged modes Collaborative redesign and rearrangement of online platform features	Visualizing online community networks and students' social connections across platforms and spaces Recontextualizing and regenring student writing, communication, and compositions across multiple modes and social platforms	Composing texts, remixes, and restoryings through a range of modes in ways that foreground counter-narratives and marginalized voices excluded by digital platforms and tools Through collaboratively structured activities, connecting class activity to more online spaces accessible beyond the schooling context
What can be transformed	Understanding of which modes of expression and participation are privileged and which are excluded so that a course redesign	Understanding of how design elements and the features of digital tools respond to and shape the expectations of online communities, reflecting who is invited in and who is excluded	Ownership of the digital tools and platforms available for use and a reconfiguration of the boundaries set for online learning contexts

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