

THE CU ONLINE HANDBOOK

**University of
Colorado Denver**

The CU Online Handbook

Teach differently: Create and collaborate

Edited by
Patrick R. Lowenthal
David Thomas
Anna Thai
Brian Yuhnke

University of Colorado Denver
Denver, Colorado

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Introduction

Patrick R. Lowenthal

Do you currently teach online? Have you thought about teaching online but for some reason haven't done it yet? Here at CU Online, we believe in the power of online learning. Whether you currently teach online or you are thinking about doing it in the future, we are here to help you sort through this process and we hope that this handbook might help you along the way. The boundaries between traditional face-to-face courses and completely online courses are beginning to blur. Therefore, as we move forward, we all must consider when, how, and why we integrate the tools that we do into our classrooms.

So where are we?

Online learning continues to shake up institutions of higher education (Daugherty & Funke, 1998; Kezar & Eckel, 2002). Despite failing to meet initial expectations of growth (Shank, 2004), online learning continues to grow each year (Dawley, 2007). For instance, according to Sloan-C, an estimated 3.2 million students took at least one online course in the fall of 2005, up 800,000 from the previous year (Allen & Seaman, 2006). While the rate of growth of online learning has slowed in comparison to previous years, it still outpaces the growth of traditional face-to-face enrollments (Jaschik, 2009). The Instructional Technology Council reported an 11.3 percent increase in 2008 (Lokken, 2009). Similarly, Sloan-C, while surveying different institutions, reported a 12.9% increase in enrollments for 2008. Not surprisingly, at the University of Colorado Denver, we have seen similar results. In the spring of 2009, there were 6,540 enrollments in fully online courses, up 12.60% from the previous spring. While enrollments in hybrid courses were less with only 1,272 enrollments, they were surprisingly up 27.20% from the previous spring. This continued growth, coupled with bold new policies—like the state of Michigan requiring high school students to take online courses in order to graduate (Watson, 2006)—suggest that online learning is here to stay.

Despite this increased growth and acceptance, many are still skeptical about the value of online learning. For sometime this led proponents of online learning to feel the need to prove that online learning is “as good as” face-to-face learning. This gave rise to the comparison studies movement in which researchers conducted countless studies comparing whether student learning in online learning was as good as student learning in face-to-face settings. The majority of these studies resulted in what's been called the No-Significant Difference phenomenon. That is, researchers found no-significant difference in student learning between online and face-to-face. Over time, though these studies have come under increased scrutiny. Methodological issues aside, people began to question whether being as good as face-to-face learning is as good as it gets (McDonald, 2002). Instead, we need to begin focusing on what we do differently in each of these learning environments that help improve student learning (Wiley, 2002).

A recent study commissioned by the US Department of Education has stirred additional interest by finding that online students tend to achieve better learning outcomes than students in traditional face-to-face courses (and students in hybrid, online, and face-to-face courses do even better than online alone!)

So while online is not a cure-all or “magic bullet”, it does have the potential to revolutionize how we think about, and deliver education. The future is here. The question is only, “What should we do about it?”

At CU Online we answer this question by striving to support faculty in whatever way we can. We have a dedicated help line for faculty and students, we develop job aids and how-to videos, we offer individual assistance on an as needed basis, we offer regular workshops (that we have even begun to simulcast for those at a distance), and we put on annual events (e.g., Summer Web Camp, Winter Web Camp, and Spring Symposium). However, each year we try to think of “new” ways to support faculty. This year, we decided to create a yearbook to provide an outlet for faculty—much like Spring Symposium—to talk about the great things that they are doing in their classrooms. That is, we wanted to provide faculty an opportunity to engage in *the scholarship of teaching*.

The scholarship of teaching is a concept that is typically traced back to Boyer (1990). In *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, Boyer argues that the work of the professoriate actually includes four functions: scholarship of discovery, scholarship of integration, scholarship of application, and the scholarship of teaching. Boyer’s work served as a catalyst to get faculty seriously talking about the scholarship of teaching. One of the most accessible definitions of the scholarship of teaching was developed by faculty at Illinois State University who understand the term as “systematic reflection on teaching and learning made public” (McKinney, n.d.). Wetson and McAlpine (2001), however, like to conceptualize “the scholarship of teaching” as laying on a continuum with three phases: Phase one, growth in own teaching; phase two, dialogue with colleagues about teaching and learning; phase three, growth in scholarship of teaching (Wetson & McAlpine, 2001).

At CU Online, we specifically focus on the first two phases of the scholarship of teaching. That is, we strive to help faculty improve their teaching and talk with their colleagues about teaching and learning. Over time, though, we hope to be able to support faculty who want to explore the third phase of the scholarship of teaching and share the knowledge they have gained about their teaching with others in a peer-reviewed manner to a larger audience. There are those like Kreber (2002) who see this as the ultimate goal of the scholarship of teaching. This book is one-step in that direction because by publishing this in print as well as an ebook, we hope to be able to share with others what we are doing here at the University of Colorado Denver.

We are known at CU Online as a group with a strong focus on the use of technology and new media. However, as much as we love playing with new tools and finding ways that these new tools can help improve teaching and learning, we strongly believe, as those like Clark (1983, 1994) have pointed out, that it’s the pedagogy and not the technology that ultimately makes the difference in student learning. Therefore, this book is as much about pedagogy as it is about technology.

This handbook consists of four different sections. The first section is about trends and issues with online learning. The second section is about technology in action. The third section includes a brief summary of 25 different new emerging tools and applications. The last section includes different resources that you might use in your online classroom. Put together we hope to turn the CU Online Handbook into an annual publication, a guide to what is new, a celebration of what works and a toolkit for exploring new territory. Online education holds the promise to change the world. We’re excited about that future and looking forward to learning the hardest thing of all: How to teach differently.

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Part 1

Trends and Issues with Online Learning

Chapter 1

From Reluctant and Reticent to Engaged and Enthusiastic: The Passage to Online Teaching

Susan Giullian

I vividly remember the day when my dean first started throwing around the words and the concept of online teaching. She presented the idea as a theoretical construct, but it wasn't long before I knew she wanted to see the objective taken to fruition. As she spoke, my mind vacillated from possibility to resistance. When the conversation concluded, I was solidly in a state of defensive denial! I built up a stockpile of reasons why the course that I most frequently taught, *Democratic Schooling: Issues of Law and Ethics*, was best served in a brick and mortar environment. Students needed to have face-to-face dialogue in order to address the tough issues associated with the ambiguity inherent in the educational arena. They would lose the dynamic interaction and the plurality of thought. It just wouldn't work! Turning to the old adage, I argued that "if it ain't broke, why fix it". My Faculty Course Questionnaires (FCQs) were good and student's regularly noted in their evaluations that they really enjoyed the class.

Transition

I see myself as a "team player." I am a Senior Instructor who wants to be viewed as an individual who supports the School's strategic plan and moves with the flow. I knew that the dean was hoping that I would start teaching online and as a result possibly influence others to do the same. Like many of my non-tenure track peers, I want to be an integral part of the university family. I saw the opportunity to teach online as a dynamic way to demonstrate my commitment. However, I still wasn't convinced I wanted to do this. I started with baby steps. I contacted the individuals at CU Online and asked to have a shell constructed for my course in Blackboard. I then attended one of the many available workshops and gained some basic skills for setting up an online course. At this point, I still had no intention of teaching this course online. But through this process, I learned that I could set up an online course shell as a supplement to my face-to-face class. To my surprise, it worked quite well.

Having a supplemental course shell helped to facilitate the needs of students who prefer to see things in written form. I placed copies of my notes, the syllabus and my lessons on the course site. As I progressed and felt more comfortable, I set up the online supplemental course shell to mirror and augment my face-to-face class. Each week contained supplemental material, which complemented the face-to-face class. As I grew, so did the materials on the site. In addition to the lessons, I posted short assessments, articles, additional reading and forums for threaded discussions. The online course shell seemed to provide endless opportunities (e.g., graphics, audio, and video links) to enhance the courses I teach.

I was happy, my students were happy, and life was good, or, so I thought. About a year later, the School of Education and Human Development decided to stop using Blackboard for supplemental courses and chose instead to use eCollege for both supplemental and fully online courses. This meant that I had to learn a completely new course management system (i.e. eCollege). I fought this change in the beginning but

over time I appreciated it because it served as an impetus to renovate my supplemental course.

A couple of years later, my dean got her wish and I began to teach online. I was provided an opportunity to design and implement a new course for our Masters in Curriculum and Pedagogy Program. The course, titled *Critical Issues in American Education*, was primarily intended for students in the Curriculum and Pedagogy (C&P) masters program. However, we hoped the course would attract students in other programs.

My past experience using supplemental course shells taught me the value of not rushing into and trying to do everything at once. I first designed the course and implemented it as an on campus class for one semester. The second semester I converted it to a hybrid (half on line and half on campus) course and tried it that way for two semesters. Then, finally, in the summer of 2006, I tried it out as a fully online course. It was not an initial success—due largely to the shortened summer timeframe. However, when I taught it a second time the following fall, it was a success. And I was completely hooked.

Engaged

My defensive denial gave way to unfettered anticipation. I started to think about the potential of online learning. The online format enabled the interchange of ideas, information, and learning. Student dialogue was not stunted and the multiplicity of perspectives prevailed. Every student had a voice and no one student monopolized the conversation. Students also benefited from the flexibility inherent in many online courses. There were no parking fees and no traffic. It was asynchronous—but not self-paced—which worked really well for busy adults. In addition, dress code was flexible; I didn't care if students took the class in their pajamas.

Ramifications and Realities and Lessons Learned

I consider myself a realist. I know that online learning does not meet the needs of all learners. However, I have also learned that online courses can be designed to utilize a variety of methodologies to address the needs of the diverse group of learners who sign up for our courses. There are some strengths and weaknesses to teaching and learning online. But then again.... this is true of teaching and learning in face-to-face environments. I will briefly address a few of the lessons I have learned teaching online.

From an instructional standpoint, I have observed a need for redundancy. For instance, I provide information and directions on the syllabus and on the course site. I also restate the directions in announcements, and I send out a weekly email message to all students reiterating my previous instructions. I don't know why this is necessary, but...it is. One technique I have found quite beneficial is the establishment of an FAQ (frequently asked question) section on the course homepage. The list is updated as issues arise.

I have also found that it is important to vary the routine when teaching online. It is easy to get into the trap of, what I call, "reiteration of practice." This is best exemplified when instructors learn or master a new skill (e.g., making PowerPoint presentations, facilitating threaded discussions, or integrating video into a course) and then utilize this new skill "ad nauseam." I have found that it is extremely important to vary your instructional strategies when teaching online—just as you would (or should) in the face-to-face classroom. Although you cannot really rearrange the chairs in an online classroom as you might in a face-to-face classroom, there are many other components that can be manipulated to provide variety (e.g., changing student groups,

procedures, types of assignments, activities, delivery techniques, modes of communication and time frames).

Another lesson I have learned relates to the concept of personality. To some degree, we build rapport with our students based upon personality traits. Personality traits are often more apparent in a face-to-face environment than online. When teaching online, we need to find ways to compensate for this discrepancy. That is, we need to find ways to build rapport and to connect with our students. This is one of the more difficult tasks. I am considering the option of holding the first session of my class in person. I believe that the students and I will both be able to associate the face with a name. In addition, I suspect that meeting everyone face-to-face will help establish the personal/personality component sometimes missing in online courses. Student will get a chance to view me as a “real person” and not just an “online instructor.” While I have not tried this yet, I believe in my head and heart that it will improve the missing personal element.

The final lesson learned is about course evaluations. In my experience, and I believe that most of my peers will concur, course evaluations are statistically lower for courses taught online than those taught face-to-face. Some of this may be due to the lack of personal connection (as mentioned above) or possibly even a mismatch between one’s preferred learning style and the focus of the course.

Enthusiastic

As I have progressed (and regressed at times) through this journey, one thing has remained constant. I am still me. I still maintain the same core ideological components that reflect my values of teaching and learning. Whether I am teaching face-to-face or online, I want my students to be exposed to a variety of ideas, learn from their experience, learn from their peers and instructor, effectively use tools to make informed decisions, and to make socially just decisions. I have come to believe that this can be accomplished in an “online world” and applied to the “real world.”

I have come to believe that teaching and learning online simply broadens the capacity of teaching and learning. Like our students, we too must demonstrate our willingness to be perpetual learners. Online teaching is gaining momentum and we need to be leaders not followers. Quoting a Latin proverb, “By learning you will teach, by teaching you will learn.”

Bio

Dr. Giullian began her extensive career and commitment to the field of Education in a suburban Denver school district. She was a teacher and administrator at both the elementary and secondary levels. She initially joined the UCD team in 1996 after being selected to serve as the “Administrator in Residence” with the School of Education. Dr. Giullian knew that she wanted to create and teach courses that balanced the information found in text and the law (policies, etc), with that learned through actual experience. She expanded her teaching repertoire when she ventured into the sphere of online education and hopes to perpetuate its effective and affective capabilities.

Chapter 2

Preparing Special Education Teachers Through Online Instruction

Donna Sobel

A critical shortage of certified special educators has been a problem for more than twenty-five years (Rosenberg, Correa, Billingsley, & Westling, 2007). Increasingly, school districts have had to hire individuals on limited or emergency teaching licenses to help alleviate these shortages (Billingsley, 2004; Knapszyk, Frey, & Wall-Marencik, 2005; McLeskey, Tyler, & Flippin, 2004). These shortages are likely to increase because the special education teacher workforce is expected to grow at a faster rate than the general education teacher workforce (McRel, 2003) while at the same time, the retirement of special education teachers is expected to increase. Given the critical shortage and projected need of special education teachers across the country as well throughout the state of Colorado, school district administrators, especially those in rural areas, are looking at ways to provide unique and alternative avenues to teacher licensure in special education.

Teachers on emergency licenses are required to pursue specific credentials in order to maintain their positions. In both urban and suburban areas, commuting times to college campuses, work schedules and other life demands make enrolling in university coursework very challenging for those holding fulltime teaching positions (Johnson, 2004; Spooner, Spooner, Algozzine, & Jordan, 1998). Alternative and distance-learning teacher education programs have been identified as viable solutions to this problem (Johnson, 2004). In particular, the promising practices of web-based instruction (e.g., self-paced learning, active learning opportunities, and collaboration with students and instructors) combined with the added flexibility associated with online delivery create a credible advantage to traditional face-to-face courses (O'Neal, Jones, Miller, Campbell & Pierce, 2007).

The preparation of highly qualified special education teachers who can accomplish the missions of public education in today's world is a complex challenge. It requires a creative approach to teacher preparation that is scientifically sound, rigorous, and results in qualified teachers who have the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions to provide instructional programs to all students. While the use of web-based instruction in special education personnel preparation has grown considerably (Ludlow, 2003; Ludlow & Duff, 2003), research specific to its application has been inconsistent (Korir Bore, 2008; Mohr, 2004). The faculty at the University of Colorado Denver's School of Education and Human Development embraced the charge to develop qualified special education teachers. Given the constraints that teachers on emergency licenses are under coupled with the benefits of learning online, providing such instruction in an online format was the next logical step.

CU-Denver's Special Education program is accredited by the State of Colorado to offer a Special Education Generalist licensure, which qualifies a teacher to work with students, ages 5-21 years of age, who have been identified with special education needs. Those needs run the gamut including varying degrees of academic, intellectual, behavior, and physical disabilities. Given the demanding expectations of a Special Education Generalist, faculty felt that this new online program would be most beneficial for

educators already certified to teach in elementary or secondary general education who wished to add a special education credential. Given the shortage of special education teachers, we knew that our prospective population for this program would be individuals who held an emergency or “temporary teacher eligibility” (ITE) license and, hence were under pressure to complete a special education program in an expeditious manner. We also projected that current on-campus students would be very appreciative of having the option of taking some, if not all, of their courses online as well. These assumptions were correct; every offering of every online course in this program has been filled to capacity since its inception.

Collaborative Course Development Efforts

Initially some faculty were apprehensive and doubtful that an online environment was an effective platform for students to learn special education content. A few faculty members voiced their reluctance to teach online; they felt this format did not match their own learning styles and that they were not willing to give-up their weekly face-to-face time with students. Yet despite this, support to move forward was unified.

Ten courses needed to be developed for the program to be offered online (see Table 1). Throughout the 2006-2007 academic year, seven faculty members attended group and individual workshops to learn how to design, implement, and evaluate web-based instruction. In addition to a superb training and a curriculum development stipend provided by CU Online, faculty were mentored all along the way. Our questions were answered in timely and professional ways, practical suggestions were graciously offered, and our hands were held when they needed to be. That expertise and support was critical.

In addition to the support provided by university-wide resources, program faculty also sought out additional support and expertise within the School of Education and Human Development. For instance, we were uniquely challenged with one particular course that focused on instructional strategies for students with severe needs. We felt that this content was too sensitive and difficult to deliver in an online format. Creating and delivering an evidence-based “methods” course online that effectively taught our students to respectfully work with individuals with multiple and significant disabilities seemed especially daunting. A colleague of ours, in the instructional design and technology program, however, helped us see that this could indeed be done.

We began designing this course by identifying the central problems of practice and the related state and professional teaching standards. We subsequently developed a series of tracking forms (i.e., the *Problems-of-Practice Matrix*, the *Problems-of-Practice-Outcomes Matrix*, and the *Problems-of-Practice-Assessment Matrix*) to help us articulate how this course supports our special education program’s vision as well as the path students would take through the course (Dunlap, Sobel, & Iceman Sands, 2007). We were then able to determine if we were adequately and evenly covering each of the learning objectives. These tracking forms also helped us balance the activities over the whole course and avoid having the workload heavier in some weeks than in other weeks. Next, we knew that we wanted to design this course with particular attention to creating rich and meaningful student-to-content interactions as well as student-to-instructor interactions. A recent publication (Sobel, Iceman Sands, Dunlap, 2009) illustrates the approach we took to incorporate (a) personalization (student-to-instructor interaction), (b) meaningful engagement (student-to-content interaction), and (c) ongoing checks of student understanding (student-to-instructor and student-to-content interactions) into this course.

Table 1. Program plan of study

Summer #1	<p>SPED 5600: Special Education for the School Professional (3 credits) This course provides an extensive understanding of legal issues in special education. The course addresses special education from the perspective of federal and state legislation, federal and state rules and regulations, school policy, litigation, and as practical applications in the school.</p>
	<p>SPED 5010: Instructional Strategies for Students with Special Needs (3 credits) The content of the course is designed to promote the acquisition of knowledge and skill in service provision for individuals who have a range of “low incidence disabilities,” including severe and multiple disabilities. Course content and processes begin with a review of the learning characteristics and needs of students with low incidence disabilities and then address differences in special education supports and services in assessment; the intensity and/or precision of instruction; and team service provision.</p>
Fall #1	<p>SPED 5140: Advanced Assessment in Special Education (4 credits) This course provides the practitioner with an understanding of assessment that informs the design and implementation of individualized instruction for students with identified special needs. Students learn to develop a body of evidence including, but not limited to, response to intervention data, curriculum based assessment, district and state assessment tools and individually administered measures.</p>
	<p>SPED 5780: Literacy Intervention for Students with Special Needs (3 credits) This course provides in depth research based study of the cognitive, linguistic and educational reasons why some students are challenged with reading and writing proficiently. Students learn how to interpret and integrate assessment data from various sources to create a learner profile that is used to guide the decisions about interventions.</p>
	<p>SPED 5910: Special Education Internship and Seminar (2 credits) Professional opportunities to apply skills in natural settings are one of the most valuable components of the program. The internship/teaching experience is not only an opportunity to demonstrate basic competencies as a teacher, but also an opportunity to enlarge the scope of techniques and strategies that each teacher brings to the classroom.</p>
	<p>SPED 5151: Positive Behavior Supports (2 credits) Provides in-depth knowledge, skills, and dispositions for special educators and other school professionals who lead systematic school renewal efforts to promote Positive Behavioral Support (PBS).</p>
Spring #1	<p>SPED 5300: Collaboration and Consultation (3 credits) Focuses on the development of competencies in consultation and collaboration. The overall purpose is to encourage the development of understanding and skills that enhance a teachers ability to work and communicate effectively with school personnel, including paraprofessionals and parents.</p>
	<p>SPED 5500: Transition/Secondary Planning (2 credits) Provides the practitioner with an understanding of the design and implementation of transition planning that meets students' physical, affective, cognitive, and communicative needs across the contexts of school, community, family life, career and vocation, and recreation/leisure.</p>
Summer #2	<p>SPED 5320: The Use of Technology in Special Education (2 credits) This course provides an overview on the wide range of available technology for individuals with special needs and the specific methods and strategies for effectively using technology.</p>
	<p>SPED 5913: Special Education Internship and Seminar (2 credits) This second internship experience is designed to build-off of the skills developed in SPED 5910 and to ensure that the candidate demonstrates skills in working with students of varying disabilities, age and grade levels.</p>

To aid in program continuity, faculty met monthly to provide status reports on the course development progress. We also worked together in a full day retreat where each course developer discussed and illustrated key aspects of his/her course. Together staff at CU-Online and program faculty critiqued each course—offering feedback on exemplary design features, suggestions for enhancements and questions to consider. These collaborative planning sessions also highlighted issues related to student advising that we subsequently addressed in program handbooks and syllabi (see figure 1). Among other things, we developed a realistic roll-out plan to ensure ample time to deal with an array of scheduling and advising issues and the ten course (26 credits) program plan of study was made available to students (see table 1).

Figure 1. Student advising information

<p>Online Instruction</p> <p>Within the Special Education program, we are offering a number of online courses. Please note, every course that is offered in an online format is also offered in a traditional face-to-face format. If you are considering an online format, please think about the following characteristics of the successful on-line student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Self-directed, independent learner.✓ Does not need face-to-face contact (with either the professor or peers) for success.✓ Reads and comprehends written instructions well.✓ Consistently demonstrates the ability to advocate for self whenever there is a question, concern or frustration.✓ Strong long range planning skills.✓ Effective time management skills.✓ Does not procrastinate.✓ Committed to reading the materials without the weekly accountability of an on-campus class.✓ Competent skill level with computer technology – or willing to seek out sources of information to learn.✓ Has consistent, dependable access to a computer with on-line capability. <p>Does this describe you as a student and compliment your learning style? If you answered yes, then you may want to plan to take courses online. As with any university course, the time expectation for outside work is two hours for every hour spent in class. In a traditional on-campus 3 credit course the student attends a three hour lecture once per week and then is expected to spend at least six hours (2 hours for each of those 3 hours in class) working on assignments. An online class has similar expectations. Students in the on-line course have assignments designed to take the place of the three hours spent in class with class discussion, small group activities, etc. The major assignments are the same. For a 3 credit on-line class, you should expect to spend approximately nine hours per week. In other words, the expectations for time for the online section are the same (it just looks a bit different).</p>

Discussion and Recommendations

The design and implementation of the online Special Education license program has been a very successful effort on several fronts. Faculty in the Special Education program saw the process as a meaningful professional development opportunity. We learned new skills and know that our face-to-face courses have been enhanced because of what we learned in developing the online courses. Several faculty, who are committed

to integrating their teaching and research, capitalized on the course development phase of this project by investigating the process from their own perspective as well as that of their students. Faculty documented and shared that professional journey through publications and presentations. Students in the Special Education program continually express appreciation for the ability to complete this program online. Professionals across the state are taking advantage of this program and most importantly, students are reporting that the impact of technology and interaction has provided them with quality learning.

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Bio

Dr. Donna Sobel is an associate professor in the School of Education & Human Development's Special Education program at the University of Colorado Denver. Dr. Sobel teaches general and special education teacher candidates in methods courses on-campus and provides on-site professional development for pre-service and inservice teachers in schools across the Denver metropolitan area. Dr. Sobel's concerns about the attitudes that teachers hold regarding issues of responsive teaching practices has led to a series of investigations examining the developing pedagogical understanding of teachers to meet the educational needs of learners from diverse backgrounds and with diverse needs.

Chapter 3

Using eCollege to Facilitate Learning, Provide for Program Coherence, Manage Accountability Innovations, and Ensure the Evolution of a Principal Licensure Program

Connie Fulmer

My love affair with online learning started at Northern Illinois University (NIU) when an email for professional development landed in my inbox with an opportunity for curriculum enhancement and *how to hang it on the Web*. The specific curricular enhance was *writing across the curriculum*, but it was the Web part that caught by eye. I signed up and two weeks later I had mastered some basic HTML and was able to create web pages to support my leadership classes at NIU. With these newfound skills, I set about the task of creating an online environment intended to support the learning activities in my courses. I uploaded specific course information that included: (a) the official course description, (b) information about me as the instructor, (c) course objectives and assignments, (d) reading assignments for each class meeting, (e) structural outline notes for each reading assignment, (f) a glossary of terms specific to this course for students to add definitions during the course, and (g) a clickable calendar. Lost in this work, I spent hours in these labor-of-love activities using technology to enhance my teaching repertoire.

Later when I joined the Administrative Leadership and Policy Studies (ALPS) faculty at the University of Colorado Denver, we began using Colorado Education Online (CEO), powered by the FirstClass system, to deliver our distance-learning programs. By creatively using folders and icons, we were able to create an environment where students could find assignments, upload letters of introduction, and other assignments as needed. Even though CEO was primarily an email system, it provided a commons area where we could create folders for anyone to access. We soon learned that we could create one folder for the entire program, and within that one program folder we could add a folder for each of the learning domains (which for the Principal program was four domains). This simple common folder structure provided students continuity and structure as they proceed thorough our intensive 32 credit-hour principal licensure program. Within each of the four domain folders, faculty added folders with assignments, assessments, reading lists and other course activities and strategies. We also added a folder for the clinical-practice element of our program. While CEO was not designed to host online courses, it did a great job and had some special features. For instance, you could create work in an email message and send it directly to the appropriate program folder. However, over time, faculty were encouraged to make the switch to eCollege.

At first, we were skeptical. We questioned whether or not eCollege could meet the needs of our already strong teaching and learning culture. We also questioned whether eCollege would enable us to transfer the nested folder structure for our program. Finally, we questioned whether eCollege would enable us the ability to give faculty and students access to course shells beyond the traditional single semester time frame (e.g., ALPS cohorts require a four-semester time frame for completion) as well after the end of a particular cohort. We found out that eCollege could meet all of our needs so,

eCollege became our course delivery system. We were pleased to find out that eCollege was easy to master. As the years have passed, we have become quite comfortable with eCollege. It can be heard around the sixth floor in the Lawrence Street Center, that before we'd switch to a new course delivery system, someone would have to pry our "mice" out of our cold dead fingers.

Providing for Program Coherence

We begin each new principal licensure cohort with a dedicated course shell in eCollege that stays active and accessible to students throughout their entire program. We use this program course shell to provide structure and coherence for students, just as we did in CEO. I will briefly outline how we structure this course shell (see Table 1) because the structure illustrates how we use this course shell.

Course Home

The first unit in the left navigation area is by default called "Course Home." Under this unit we include the following content items (a) program syllabus, (b) ALPS Handbook, (c) Wacky Weather Protocols, (d) Registration Information, (e) information for students seeking a Master of Arts MA or an Educational Specialist EdS degree, (f) graduation information, (g) licensure information, and (h) a class list.

Program Texts

The second unit is called "Program Texts." This tab not only lists the names of all the required and optional reading for the entire program but also includes links to publishers, book vendors, and other resources separated by learning domains (i.e., leadership; school improvement, instructional leadership and evaluation, and equity).

PBAs

The third unit is called "PBAs," which stands for performance-based assessments. Under this unit, there are four content items—one for each of the learning domains in the program. This unit (and the four content items) outlines information about each of the performance-based assessment in our program. Things such as rationale statements, descriptions for specific PBAs, guiding questions for student learning activities, specific reading assignments, web-based resources, required learning activities and work products, and grading rubrics are included to help prepare students for the PBAs.

Clinical Practice

The fourth unit is called "Clinical Practice." Because of the complex nature of clinical practice, there are six different content items under this unit. Specifically, there is one for (a) a clinical practice contract between the intern and the school site supervisor, (b) a form and directions for writing clinical practice goals, (c) a form and directions for writing clinical practice logs, (d) the clinical practice evaluation form and instructions for its administration and collection, (e) a data sheet for collecting information regarding the site of the clinical practice experience and the school site supervisor, (e) information on how to register your school supervisor to receive university credit for supervising the principal candidate, and (f) the clinical practice handbook. Each of the items are included to help ensure students have a successful clinical practice.

Portfolio

The fourth unit is called "Portfolio." This section of the course shell describes the requirements for the end of program portfolio that students complete. More specifically, here students learn how to construct the required elements of their program

portfolios (i.e., portfolio cover page, table of contents, leadership resume, CDE standards evidence matrix, performance-based assessments, clinical-practice documentation, professional growth plan, graduate degree requirements and faculty approval of final portfolio).

Table 1. Overall Structure of Program Course Shell in eCollege

Course Home
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Syllabus • ALPS Handbook • Wacky Weather Protocols • Registration Information • MA & EdS • Graduation Information • Licensure Information • Class List
Program Texts
PBAs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PBA1 • PBA2 • PBA3 • PBA4
Clinical Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP Contract • CP Goals • CP Log • CP Reflections • CP Evaluation • Data Sheet • SS Reg Form • CP Handbook
Portfolio
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Review • 2nd Review • 3rd Review • Final Review • Portfolio Guidelines
Standards
Self-Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys 1-4 • Professional Growth Charts • Professional Growth Plan
Denver Dates

Standards

The sixth unit is called “Standards.” Our principal program was designed to meet three sets of standards: (a) Colorado performance standards for principals, (b) Colorado performance standards for administrators (CDE), and (c) the national standards called the ELCC-NCATE standards (National Policy Board for Educational

Administration, 2002). During their program, students must demonstrate their knowledge of these standards and are evaluated on this knowledge.

Self-Assessment

The seventh unit is called “Self-Assessment.” Self-assessment is an important component of the principal program and under this unit students can find 11 online surveys that they must complete at four times throughout their program to demonstrate their levels of understanding. A Professional Growth Chart is also located under this unit. The Professional Growth Chart is an excel file that students use to enter their self-assessment scores (from the 11 online self-assessment surveys) throughout their program. The excel file creates a visual representation in the form of a graph of students’ progress during their program. This graph is then used by students to help them to create a professional growth plan for once they graduate.

Denver Dates

The last unit is called “Denver Dates.” This unit includes information about all face-to-face meetings (e.g., dates, times, location, agenda) organized by semester.

This overall structure is common to each ALPS principal licensure cohort. Using these eCollege tools to support the teaching and learning culture we developed in our days of using CEO has served us well to provide an organized learning environment and therefore, program coherence between faculty teaching in the program and between cohorts starting in different semesters and in partnership with different school districts.

Managing Accountability Innovations

eCollege has provided our team with the virtual space to create, manage, and administer several online accountability tools (i.e., self assessments for Colorado Department of Education principal performance standards, performance-based assessments, a reflective justification paragraphs and grading rubrics, a scurry matrix, and a professional growth plan). Keeping in mind the literature on effective assessment (Chappius, Stiggins, Arter, & Chappius, 2003; Wiggins & McTighe, 1998, 2007) and effective online delivery (Baker, 2003; Hutchins, 2003; Pennsylvania State University, 2002), we developed these accountability tools to address both the assessment *‘of’* learning and *‘for’* learning. Each of these accountability tools is described in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Self-Assessments

We ask students to self assess their perceived levels of competency for each of the principal standards. We initially had students rate themselves using the following scale: (a) no to little evidence, (b) some evidence, (c) conceptual evidence, or (d) performance evidence (Fulmer, 2005). However, we have since adopted Wiggins’ and McTighe’s (1998) six facets of understanding to structure our self-assessments using a three levels of proficiency scale (i.e., emergent, proficient, and exemplary) which is explained in Table 2.

The rationale behind this is that if a leader can explain, interpret, and apply knowledge, dispositions, and skills, then they can pretty much get the work of a leader accomplished. But if they can do those three skills and add characteristics of perspective, empathy, and self-reflection, they are providing evidence of a polished professional leader. These self-assessments are administered online in eCollege.

Table 2. Three Levels of Proficiency Scale

<i>Emergent Understanding</i>	If students select <i>Emergent Understanding</i> , it means they can provide an <u>explanation</u> of (a) the knowledge, dispositions, and skills, related to the standard, (b) the appropriate and related literature and the general contents of those works to the standard, (c) how the context of their school environment might influence their choices for action as a leader, and (d) what strategies they might employ as a future leader.
<i>Proficient Understanding</i>	If students select <i>Proficient Understanding</i> , it means they can not only can <u>explain</u> , but also <u>interpret</u> and <u>apply</u> (a) the knowledge, dispositions, and skills, related to the standard, (b) the appropriate and related literature and the general contents of those works to the standard, (c) how the context of their specific school environment might influence their choices for action as a leader, and (d) what strategies they might employ in the future.
<i>Exemplary Understanding</i>	If students select <i>Exemplary Understanding</i> , it means they are able to <i>not only</i> <u>explain</u> , <u>interpret</u> , and <u>apply</u> (a) the knowledge, dispositions, and skills, related to the standard, (b) the appropriate and related literature and the general contents of those works to the standard, (c) how the context of their specific school environment might influence their choices of action as a leader, and (d) what strategies they might use in the future, <i>but also</i> do so with <u>perspective</u> , <u>empathy</u> , and <u>self-reflection</u> .

Performance-Based Assessments

The basic idea of a PBA in our program is that there are certain activities that principals need to be able to do to run a school. PBAs provide students with structured opportunities to demonstrate that they know and are able to complete these specific activities. Thus, students carry out these activities in their own school environment with other teachers and administrators. Each of our four learning domains (i.e., leadership, school improvement, instructional leadership and evaluation, and equity) has specific PBAs and each PBA is structured around specific activities and aligned with certain standards.

Students can read about each PBA in the eCollege program course shell. Each PBA has an outline that explains the rationale for the assessment as well as descriptions, guiding questions, reading requirements and web-based resources. Once the student has completed the PBA, he or she prepares what we call a learning narrative (which follows a specific format with standard headings). Throughout the learning narrative, students determine where best to add specific reflective-justification paragraphs demonstrating what they have done and learned. The PBAs are then evaluated with rubrics specifically created for these projects (using the same levels of proficiency as listed in Table 2). Students’ work is viewed as developmental and students are expected to improve their work based on the feedback they receive throughout their program.

Reflective-Justification Paragraphs and Rubrics

In addition to Self-Assessments and PBAs, students in our program also write reflective justification paragraphs for each CDE standard cited in their learning narratives. When writing these, students strive (a) to use the standard correctly, (b) to cite relevant literature to support the use of the standard, (c) to use the standard and the

literature citation in the context of their specific school environment, and (d) to (based on the information provided in the prior three sections) outline the steps, stages, strategies, or their preferred response repertoire for how they would behave as a leader.

The Reflective-Justification rubric has been created for both students and faculty. Students use the rubric to create their reflective-justification paragraphs. Faculty use the rubric to determine if the reflective-justification paragraphs meet the program requirements.

The Scurry Matrix

The scurry matrix tool, is a simple standards matrix. It is named after the character *Scurry* from Johnson and Blanchard's (1998) book *Who Moved My Cheese*. The standards are listed down the left side of the document and the four learning domains of the program are listed across the top. Students use this matrix to demonstrate their mastery of standards by learning domain. While student work is only required to be at the proficient level, we encourage students to reach the exemplary level. Students use the Scurry Matrix and their Self Assessment results to complete their Professional Growth plan.

The Professional Growth Plan

The Professional Growth Plan is the last accountability innovation that we use. The plan is a structured interview protocol that student's complete in preparation for their final portfolio evaluation. Students are asked to think about their self-assessment results and any standards they might still need to provide evidence of mastery on. Students are also asked whether or not there are any areas of knowledge or skills they feel they still need to acquire and if so, how they plan to acquire them. Similarly, students are asked how they plan to stay current in their field (e.g., what journals will they read or what professional organizations will they join). Students are also asked how they plan to improve their leadership skills. And finally students are asked to identify some leadership goals they hope to attain once they graduate. This Professional Growth Plan is meant to serve as a link between the end of our program and the beginning of their practice as school leaders.

Reflecting on the Student Experience

The learning curve for our program is quite predictable. During the first semester students and faculty alike are quite pleased with the program. However, the second semester is perhaps the toughest semester –which our FCQs reflect. We surmise that this has something to do with the tuition bill being due for a second semester in a row while at the same time, the pile of books (and therefore reading) seems to be increasing almost exponentially. No one believes they can read all of the required information in a lifetime let alone in the four short semesters of the program.

The goal of the program is take teachers who want to be principals into the program and to push out future leaders at the end of the program who are capable of running a school *on day one*. But in the middle of the program, many students question their sanity and try to figure out how to balance their work, their program, and their families day-to-day. Some think of quitting. Some actually do. But for those who stay, the magic happens in the third semester.

By the third semester, students have figured out how our innovative accountability and assessment system works. They become more familiar with the literature and their required readings and begin to “name drop” key authors and concepts they found in the readings. They stand taller and take on a new more confident identity of an educator

ready for a new position of leadership in the future. They find themselves more comfortable with the workload of the program while at the same time realizing that the work of a principal is more difficult than previously thought.

During the fourth and last semester, most are pushing hard to graduate on time. However, many are already looking for an open principal position. Faculty, on the other hand, are already thinking about how to modify learning assignments and elements in the eCollege shell to better support student learning.

Ensuring the Continual Evolution of the Principal Licensure Program

eCollege has provided the virtual space in which to offer a fully online principal licensure program. This space became our training ground to develop new performance-based assessments and accountability systems to help us prepare educational leaders. As we perfected our program and performance-based assessments in the online cohort, we took them to our face-to-face cohorts. However, our program is continually evolving and improving. We are always happy to start each new cohort, because we get a chance to make any needed changes to our program. As a result, this next group of students is always getting the best possible version of our program.

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Bio

Connie Fulmer earned her Ph.D. in Educational Administration at The Pennsylvania State University and started her academic career at Northern Illinois University, where she held the following leadership positions: Faculty Chair of Educational Administration and School Business Management; Associate Department Chair of Leadership and Educational Policy Studies; and Interim Chair of the Teacher Education Department. In July of 2000, Connie joined the Administrative Leadership and Policy Studies faculty here at UCD and became first Program Chair of the ALPS Principal Licensure Program, then Division Coordinator of Administrative Leadership and Policy Studies, and most recently Director of the Teacher Education Division.

Chapter 4

Make, Share, Find: Web 2.0 and Informal Learning

Phil Antonelli

In the last decade of the 1990s excitement bordering on hysteria contributed to what was referred to as the “New Economy.” Fueled by the proliferation of personal computers and Web-based “dot-com” technology, the NASDAQ Composite soared 4,000 points in the years between 1995 and 2000. Inevitably, the dot-com bubble burst and in the months between March 2000 and October 2002; the NASDAQ Composite shed almost 80% of its value. As Web technologies evolved in the aftermath of the collapse, a subtle but important shift began to take place in the nature of the Web. In simple terms, the Web moved from being static to dynamic. People started to refer these new dynamic technologies as Web 2.0 (to distinguish them from those that proliferated during the dot-com era) because they signified a shift in which anyone could publish content to the Web. Thus, one of the key differences between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 is that content is now largely created by day-to-day users and not a select group of web developers. Web 2.0 can be defined as: Web-based tools and systems that enable the creation, dissemination, and acquisition of user created content. However, I think that Web 2.0 can be further distilled into three words: Make, Share, Find.

Perhaps the most well known examples of Web 2.0 are social networking sites like MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and Flickr Web sites like these enable users to actively communicate, collaborate, create, and share content with people all over the world. The rapid adoption of social networking has been nothing short of phenomenal. For instance, as of April 2009, Facebook claims to have 200 million active users.

The growth of Web 2.0 can be attributed to its natural characteristics, these include ease of use, low cost (in many cases they are free) and user enjoyment. Given the huge growth and participation in Web 2.0, learning professionals at all levels of education have begun to question how these Web 2.0 applications can be used for learning purposes.

Formal vs. Informal Learning

Educators—whether in K12, higher education, or corporate spaces—tend to focus on formal learning that involves such things as content delivery, practice, feedback, assessment, and evaluation. However, learning is a natural human cognitive process that is constantly occurring whether someone is in a formal learning setting or not. A simple example of this is how toddlers learn to speak their native tongue. They may be “coached” by parents and family members but barring physical deficits there are no formal classes necessary to learn to speak. This type of learning has been defined as informal learning.

One study conducted on informal learning in the workplace found that employees acquire 70 percent of job related knowledge from informal learning activities (Cofer, n.d.). It is probably not a great stretch to infer that a similar amount of informal learning takes place across all settings, populations, and age groups. What this suggests is that we are spending the majority of our time and resources on the smallest segment of learning when we are focusing on formal learning rather than day-to-day just-in time informal

learning. Further, Web 2.0 applications continue to support and encourage informal, just-in-time, learning.

Learning and Web 2.0

Learning is happening everyday on the Web. This should not surprise us; both Bloom’s Taxonomy and social learning theory provide a solid rationale for why this is the case.

Bloom’s Taxonomy

Educators are often very familiar with Bloom’s taxonomy. Bloom’s taxonomy is a model used to classify levels of thinking. During the 1990’s, Anderson and Krathwhol (2001) revised Bloom’s taxonomy (see Table 1) placing analyzing, evaluating, and creating as the highest levels of thinking. Web 2.0 applications and the subsequent practice of engaging in Web 2.0 activities tends to involve these higher levels of thinking. For instance, perhaps one of the quintessential characteristics of Web 2.0 applications is the focus on creating. That is, whether you are referring to the original or the updated version of Bloom’s Taxonomy, it is easy to make the case that this area of Web 2.0 participation includes the highest levels of the cognitive domain. Creation is a synthesis of disparate elements organized into a meaningful whole. Implicit in this activity is the analysis of components and the evaluation of outcomes.

Table 1. Bloom’s Taxonomy

Original version	Updated
Evaluation	Creating
Synthesis	Evaluating
Analysis	Analyzing
Application	Applying
Comprehension	Understanding
Knowledge	Remembering

Social Learning Theory

Just like Bloom’s Taxonomy, Social Learning Theory provides an explanation for why Web 2.0 applications, and the daily practices that these applications encourage, not only support but also encourage learning.

Lev Vygotsky’s Social Learning Theory suggests that social interaction is fundamental to cognitive development and that socio-cultural relationships are an initial step to acquiring knowledge. Similarly, Bandura’s theory of Social Learning suggests that people learn vicariously by observing the actions and results of others. And finally the work of Lave and Wenger on situated learning highlights how learning is highly contextual and always situated in a community of some sort.

All three of these different theories of social learning point to the important role that social interaction, context, authentic activities (e.g., the act of creating), and social communities of practice play in learning. Web 2.0 applications and their emphasis on making, sharing, and finding things aligns very naturally with social theories of learning.

Formal Strategies for Informal Learning

The Make, Share, Find characteristics of Web 2.0 applications should encourage educators to think differently about how they support learning. I will touch on a few formal strategies educators can use to support informal learning. It’s important to note

though that educators who find comfort in controlling the learning environment are going to have to let go and act as enablers of learning rather than providers if they are to effectively leverage the strengths of Web 2.0 applications.

Make

As mentioned earlier, Web 2.0 applications allow and encourage users to make and create. Therefore, educators can use these applications to foster an atmosphere that supports creativity of all kinds. For instance, educators can encourage or even require students to make and create content in blogs and wikis to help learners verbally process information. Often all educators need to do—especially when trying to support informal learning—is to provide a skeleton structure to get things started.

Share

Another great opportunity for educators is to connect learners, whether in formal or informal learning settings, with other learners; that is, help learners get connected with their own community of practice. One way to do this is by setting up a Ning or using Twitter but other ways might include creating a delicious account(s) for learners to share resources.

Find

Finally, the Web is full of information. Helping students develop and incorporate effective searching and finding strategies on the Web can help support just-in-time informal learning. Further, Web 2.0 applications like Delicious and Diigo help users bookmark resources found and share with others as needed.

Putting It All Together

The great promise of Make, Share, Find is the ability to tap into and leverage the content created by users for learning purposes. For example, a new employee training program might include a link to the CEO's blog. In a similar fashion, a “Mashup” — the integration of another program like Google maps — could be used to show student locations in a distance learning program. Content that is subject to frequent changes can be created online (e.g., in a Wiki) and learners can then use RSS to keep up-to-date on any changes. Finally, course ratings of college Web-based learning courses and programs could appear in the social network side along with user recommendations.

Educators at all levels need to abreast in the developments that are taking place in Web 2.0. The Make, Share, Find of Web 2.0 ties into and supports a wide variety of learning activities and outcomes. To fulfill the potential that exists in Web 2.0 learning, it is necessary for educators to develop new skills and competencies. To make the most of the opportunities it presents it is necessary to move from a narrow tactical approach focused on observing measurable results into one that is strategic, consultative, collaborative, and content with unexpected outcomes.

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Bio

During the course of his tortuous career (which pre-dates the Internet), Phil Antonelli has worked as an artist, politician, middle school teacher, and instructional designer. For the past fifteen years, he has created instructor-led and Web-based training for corporate, university, and K–12 audiences. He is a gold medal recipient of an Excellence in Learning award from Brandon Hall in the area of blended learning. He lives in Denver where he is employed as a Senior Instructional Designer by ACS Inc.

Part 2

Technology in Action

Chapter 5

The Advantages of a Ning Social Network Within a Higher Education Program

Laura Summers

Ning is a Web 2.0 platform used to host over 600,000 online social networking communities for groups of like-minded people (2008). In this article, I will explain how I came to use Ning to create a social network for students in the *School Library and Instructional Leadership* (SLIL) program.

Background

I am the coordinator for a *School Library and Instructional Leadership* (SLIL) program at the University of Colorado Denver. In May 2007 I began to search for ways to create a free, easy-to-navigate, online community for students in the SLIL Program. I was specifically looking to create some type of social network because I believed that social networking is a great way for people to have discussions, apply knowledge, and collaboratively work together to solve problems. However, I was not sure what this social network should or could look like.

I was looking for a space that would provide a few key things. First, I wanted a visual environment where students could communicate and collaborate with their classmates outside of class. Second, I wanted this online community to provide me a way to stay in contact with our full-time working students. Third, I was hoping that an online community could help foster professional growth for students by providing a space where they can learn from each other's experiences in their jobs as K-12 educators. Fourth, students in the SLIL program are expected to be well versed in using various forms of technology. Often though our students feel overpowered by their tech-savvy millennial students. I hoped that an online community could provide students in the SLIL program an authentic way to practice technology skills like uploading video clips, creating a podcast, and writing a blog. Finally, students in the SLIL program take either classes online or one Saturday a month. Despite the obvious benefits of completing a program this way for working adults, students often begin to feel isolated and cut off from the university. Therefore, I wanted to create a space that would help students feel more connected with the program and the university.

I began experimenting with online groups such as Yahoo groups and Google groups. However, I was not happy with these online groups; they couldn't meet each of my previously mentioned goals. Through networking with other teacher-librarians, I learned about the nation-wide *Teacher-Librarian* network (see: <http://teacherlibrarian.ning.com>) which is the grand-father of all Ning social networks in the school library profession. After learning more about it, I decided to pilot a smaller, closer-to-home program network in Ning—which I called the 21st Century Teacher-Librarian Ning. The Ning can be accessed at <http://21centurylibrarian.ning.com>. Initially during the pilot, 27 students joined the Ning as a part of an initial class. The pilot was a success and now two years later, 205 members have joined including students, alumni, faculty, and librarian-friends. In the following pages, I briefly elaborate on how you can create a social network of your own

in minutes using Ning and some things to consider to help ensure your social network is a success.

Building a Social Network

Setting up a basic social network site in Ning is quick and easy and only takes about 30 minutes. I briefly describe the four steps it takes to get your Ning up and running.

Step 1: Create Account

All one has to do is to go to www.ning.com to create an account. Through this process, the person creating the account becomes the network creator, and chooses a network name and domain address. For instance, the network name of the Ning I created is 21st Century Teacher-Librarians and the domain address is <http://21centurylibrarian.ning.com>.

Step 2: Customize Appearance

The first thing a network creator should see when he or she logs into Ning is a big green menu bar with three big buttons called “Invite Members,” “Customize Appearance,” and “Add Content.” By clicking on “Customize Appearance,” the network creator can change the look and feel of the Ning by selecting a theme and then changing it as needed. The appearance can later be changed by clicking on the “Manage” tab.

Step 3: Add Content

After the appearance has been set, the network creator can add content by clicking on the “Add Content” button or by clicking edit on any of the default pods (which are called “Features” in Ning). By default, your Ning will most likely have a “Latest Activity,” “Members,” “Photos,” “Videos,” and “Events” feature but others can be added under the Manage tab.

Step 4: Invite Members

But perhaps the most important step to setting up a social network is to invite members. This can be done by clicking the “Invite Members” button, which as mentioned earlier, is temporary displayed on the front page when you set up a new Ning. But you can later invite members to join your Ning by clicking on the “Invite” tab in the top navigation.

Just like that with four quick and easy steps you should have your social network up and running in Ning. However, keep in mind that a social network’s success depends on the people that make up the network and how it is managed.

Managing a Social Network

The network creator of a Ning, or anyone who has been given administrative privileges, will have access to the Manage tab in the top navigation menu bar. Among other things, under the Manage tab, one can accept new members, ban members, and control features as needed. The network creator can also set up the structure of the network site under the manage tab. For instance, at the top of the main page in the direct center of the 21st Century Teacher-Librarian site, visitors can read a welcome note encouraging students to ask questions of each other within a forum or post a blog entry. There is also a link to the program website and a list of members with thumbnail

photos. In another network I created for the Colorado State Library's Power Library Program (see: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/powerlib/index.htm>), visitors are greeted with the goals of the program in the top center, a prime real estate area. Ning is very versatile and customizable; it allows the network creator to move content around based on the users' needs.

Popular Features

Ning gives users the ability to add a number of different features. Educators need to think about the purpose of their Ning when deciding which features to add and where to add them. I will briefly address some popular features I have used in the Nings I have created.

A popular feature to add to the main page of a Ning is a list of upcoming conferences under the events feature. Students can even be invited to an event through an email link. Using the event feature in this way, I have been able to inform students about professional development opportunities in the area. I have also used the notes feature to create a space on the Ning to list program requirements standards and links to state standards and endorsement requirements. Two other popular features in Ning are the blog feature and the forum feature. Both of these features enable faculty and students discuss various topics within Ning. Currently, sock puppet poetry slam; adopt-a-Dewey; movies vs. the books; wikis; and media literacy are just a few of the topics currently featured on the main page of the 21st Century Teacher-Librarian network. Students know immediately where the most recent conversations are taking place along and what topics network administrators, who are also program faculty, want to highlight. Another useful feature is the activity feature. The activity feature offers shows the most recent activity in the Ning—in other words, it shows which forums have been updated the most recently. Finally, public (i.e., open to anyone in the Ning) or private (i.e., only open to specific members) groups can also be created to provide specific spaces for groups with similar interests or needs within your social network. Within private groups, the owner has to invite participants to join that section and members-at-large cannot view any posted information from that sub-group.

While not necessarily a "feature" but another nice and notable capability of Ning is the ability to prompt new users when joining the network to answer required or optional questions. For alumni and internship purposes, I have used this option to collect information about members of the social network so that I can follow students beyond graduation and possibly find good internship locations for current students within the program.

Limitations

Perhaps the biggest limitation of running a Ning for students is the time requirement. While it is easy to setup, in my experience, you have to continually contribute to the social network if you want it to last. I attempt to post a blog entry once a month about a professional experience I have had. Program instructors are encouraged to keep forum discussions updated and to use the network as a place to showcase performance-based assessments. Some courses require students to blog or to post professional links within the network.

Initially, the SLIL network was setup to be a private network which meant that only approved members could access the network. However, we learned that setting it up as a private function kept the Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feed option from working. RSS allows members to know when a response to a question has been answered or a new blog is posted. We felt that it was extremely important to have RSS

enabled so we eventually opened the network to non-members. Among other things, opening a network up can put a network at the risk of spammers.

Finally, one last possible limitation of using a Ning is that the free version of the application includes a column of advertisements always viewable on the left side of the screen. Ning has tried to market to the network's audience and for the most part the advertisements have not created a distraction from the network's purpose. However, the only way to eliminate the advertisements is to add premium services. Currently to go ad-free, it costs \$24.95 per month.

Conclusion

“As with any new technology the answers do not lie within the software or the virtual space, but rather within the human capital: the collective wisdom that emerges from collaborative work with our peers” (Summers, 2009). Ning also means peace in Chinese (Bianchini, 2007) and one might even hope that with the ability to communicate globally through a virtual network, there might be greater understanding among different cultures through social networking.

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Bio

Laura L. Summers, Ph.D. is an assistant professor in the Information, Technology, & Learning Program in the School of Education at UC Denver where she directs the online and hybrid ILT-School Library graduate degree programs. Laura's online instructional design, teaching, and research practices are based upon her 20 year career spanning business, K-12 education, and higher education. Her dream is to be a part of social, engaging, collaborative, reflective, and transformational online and hybrid learning opportunities.

Chapter 6

Fresh and Forward-thinking: Using Blogs for Educational Purposes

Joanna C. Dunlap



Ellen Stevens

We are intrigued with blogs – online, Web-based journals in the form of frequent, chronological publications of thoughts and ideas, typically within a specific theme or area of interest. We have been exploring the educational potential of blogs and blogging for some time now. We started blogging for several reasons:

- To be heard, to have a voice on issues of personal interest (e.g., Joni blogs about her thoughts on teaching at <http://thoughtsonteaching-jdunlap.blogspot.com/>), and to disseminate ideas to our professional community.
- To engage with our domain and professional community as lifelong learners.
- To connect with others who have similar interests, and to build a network of colleagues and collaborators.
- To formatively share and test ideas and perspectives that might otherwise not see the light of day (via a formal presentation or journal article).
- To collect and organize ideas to support our teaching and scholarship (for example, Joni has gone on to publish articles based on posts in her blog).
- To engage with Web 2.0 technologies in a relevant and meaningful way that supports our practice.
- To establish a reputation as a source of ideas for postsecondary online teaching practices, online education, and eLearning design.

Educational Uses of Blogging

But using blogs for educational purposes is a bit different. In terms of using blogs with our students, we have frequently had students use blogs for reflective journaling – summarizing class discussions, reflecting on what they learned during a class activity or project, sharing ideas for applying what they have learned to their own practice, and so on. We have also used blogs with students to accomplish a number of other objectives that we will quickly elaborate on in the following paragraphs.

Articulate Ideas and Make Thinking Visible

We have used blogs to encourage students to articulate their ideas and perspectives, make their thinking visible, and be brave and bold about their contributions to the greater discourse. At the same time, we have used blogs to make our own thinking visible about a course. For instance, Joni has created a course-specific blog where she shares her thoughts about the course in progress; see her IT 5130 Ideation Journal – <http://it5130journal.blogspot.com/> – for a current example. This allows students to see how she is thinking about what works and does not work, what she wants to do next time, ideas that occur to her because of the in-class discussions, and so on. She used to do this privately, in a course notebook that was for her eyes only. Now, with a course

ideation blog, students get to see her thinking, and she models reflective practice in the process.

Promote Reflection and Analysis

We also use blogs to engage students in reflection on the domain, requiring them to critically analyze ideas, perspectives, theories, research, and designs. Because student blogs are linked together in our course communities, there is a social context that supports a unique caliber of thoughtfulness, very different from the private reflective journals we have used in the past.

Connect Students to a Professional Community of Practice

We also use blogs educationally to encourage students to see themselves as participating and contributing members of a professional community of practice. That is, we have students use their blogs as (a) avenues for garnering feedback on ideas from course and community colleagues and (b) opportunities for collaboration with colleagues.

Promote a Habit of Writing

We use blogging in our classrooms also as a way to promote writing. We have found that blogging helps students express themselves and share their ideas and perspectives in an articulate way; that is, it helps them to write, organize their writing, and develop a habit of writing. We have included a rubric (see Table 1) as an example of how we assess students' blog activity.

Introduce Web 2.0 Tools

Finally, we use blogging to introduce students to Web 2.0 tools. Web 2.0 tools can be used as vehicles for self-expression, inquiry, construction, and collaboration as well as to support lifelong learning endeavors. Further, using blogging for educational purposes enables us an opportunity to take advantage of the Web 2.0 tools students are using in their personal – and often professional – lives.

Another benefit of introducing blogging and other Web 2.0 tools for our students—who are in the field of education—is it gives them an opportunity to learn to use Web 2.0 tools as aids to instruction with their own students. For example, Ellen has integrated blogging and Web 2.0 tools like delicious into her EPSY: 6600 Human Motivation class (see <http://delicious.com/motivation09>)

Drawbacks of Using Blogs for Educational Purposes

While we have been very satisfied with using blogging for education purposes—for many of the reasons addressed in the preceding section—we recognize that there are some drawbacks to using blogs for educational purposes that faculty should consider before integrating them into their teaching. In the following paragraphs, we will briefly address a few common pitfalls to consider.

Time-Consuming

Maintaining a blog is a time-consuming proposition. For it to be valuable, you need to be active – reading others' blogs to continue to learn about the domain and connect with others, and contributing new posts to your own blog. Therefore, you should keep this in mind when and if you consider using blogging for educational purposes.

Very Public

Blogs can be setup as public or private. Unless your blog is set up to be private (so that only those invited have access), a blog is very public. While this is one of the strengths of blogging, it can also be seen as a drawback for many. When having students set up blogs, it is important to help them understand this, and act accordingly.

Informal Writing

Blogging tends to reinforce a more casual, informal writing style. We actually like this because a more informal writing style can be more inviting to the community, allowing community members to feel more comfortable participating in the conversation. However, that sort of writing style is not appropriate for all activities or projects, so it is helpful to keep this in mind when involving students with blogging.

Tips for Using Blogging for Educational Purposes

We have been using blogging for educational purposes for a few semesters now. Throughout this process, we have learned a few things about what works and doesn't work (at least in our courses). In terms of blogging tips, we have a few to share:

- Select a very specific, unique focus for the blog.
- Do not ask students to share anything publicly that may do their reputation or credibility harm.
- Establish a blogging schedule. For example, Stephen Downes has a great blog called Half an Hour (see: <http://halfanhour.blogspot.com/>). The title refers to the amount of time he spends each day (or, at least tries to) sharing with the community via his blog.
- Pursue opportunities to connect and collaborate with colleagues. When people connect with you via your blog, respond. When you go out searching others' blogs, make a connection to your own.

Concluding Thoughts

Recently, we saw a photo of a gentleman wearing a t-shirt he received as a gift from his wife. Stenciled on the shirt was, "My blog has an audience of 2." It is certainly desirable to have more than an audience of two for your blog. To achieve this, you have to strive for a balance between the intrapersonal (personal reflective journal) and interpersonal (connecting with others in discussion) aspects of blogging. This means that it is not enough just to post in your blog – you have to read and connect with other blogs, linking your posts to others, and so on. This requires time and energy, but it helps keep you up-to-date on what others in the community of practice are thinking and keeps your own work fresh. Therefore, involving students in blogging can help them develop the needed disposition to participate in and with the professional community of practice, be active contributors to the community's knowledge base, and engage in lifelong learning so their practice is always fresh and forward-thinking.

Table 1. Blog Reflection Rubric

Developing (0 points)	Proficient (20 points)	Strong (30 points)
Overall Use of Blogs		
Some required blog entries and comments have been completed. (0 points)	Five blog entries are submitted, though not all of them may give evidence of a substantial contribution. (7.5 points)	Five blog entries are submitted, all of which are substantial. Beyond the required five, your blog includes many more reflections. (12 points)
Intellectual Engagement with Key Concepts		
Blog entries make some reference to issues raised through readings and/or class activities. (0 points)	Blog entries demonstrate awareness of most of the key issues raised through readings and/or class activities. (5 points)	Blog entries demonstrate engagement with the important issues raised through readings and/or class activities. (7.5 points)
Personal Response to Key Concepts		
Blog entries convey little evidence of a personal response to the issues/concepts raised in the readings/activities. (0 points)	Blog entries convey evidence of a personal response to the issues raised in the readings/ activities, and demonstrate that the author is capable of reflecting on learning, technology, and society. (5 points)	Blog entries convey extensive evidence of a personal response to the issues raised in the readings/ activities, and demonstrate the author's growth through reflection on learning, technology and society. (7.5 points)
Engaged Writing		
Blog entries demonstrate some evidence of correct spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc. Audience will have little trouble reading your blog. (0 points)	Blog entries show a good command of Standard English. No problems for your audience. Most blog entries include links. (2 points)	Blog entries show a very good command of Standard English and have some flair and originality. Blog entries may contain multiple links. (3 points)

Modified from a rubric found at http://www.catholicforum.com/churches/cathteach/outcomes_rubric_reflection_journal.html

Bios

Dr. Joanna Dunlap is an associate professor of instructional design and technology at the University of Colorado Denver. An award-winning educator, her teaching and research interest's focus on the use of sociocultural approaches to enhance adult learners' development and experience in postsecondary settings. For over 13 years, she has directed, designed, delivered and facilitated distance and eLearning educational opportunities for a variety of audiences. She also works in the Center for Faculty Development as the Faculty Fellow for Teaching, sharing ideas about teaching with online and on-campus faculty across the university.

Ellen Stevens is the Founding Director of the UC Denver, Center for Faculty Development and an Associate Professor of Educational Psychology in the School of Education & Human Development. She holds a B.A. in Experimental Psychology from California State University, San Bernardino and a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from Stanford University. She was the Assistant Director for the Center for Teaching Enhancement at the University of South Florida, and has offered numerous workshops about issues in college teaching in a variety of settings. The focus of her scholarship is university faculty and college teaching.

Chapter 7

Hanging on by a Thread

Dorothy F. Garrison-Wade

I view my role as a teacher is to facilitate students' learning by challenging them to explore and construct knowledge by solving authentic problems. Yet, how does one effectively do this in an online class? For me, this is an ongoing challenge. I attempt to bring my online courses alive by using a variety of technological tools such as PowerPoint, web conferencing (*Adobe Connect*), graphic design, audio tools (*Jing*), and links to other web-based videos. Yet, the most effective tool I use in my online classes to enliven the online format is threaded discussions.

A threaded discussion is conversation around a main topic in which secondary postings are the "threads" that spin off from the main discussion (Horton, 2000). Through threaded discussions, students participate in discourse that promotes questioning and critical thinking, which in turn facilitates their learning. In addition, threaded discussions give my students in the School of Education and Human Development opportunities to develop their leadership skills and to collaborate by sharing ideas and strategies to improve their individual learning as well as their work in schools. In this article, I discuss how I use threaded discussions as an instructional tool to bring the online classroom environment alive. I also share how I have taken threaded discussions a step further by using them to evaluate my teaching and students' growth and development through an exploratory research study.

Using Threaded Discussion to Engage Students in Critical Discourse

Offenholley (2006) states threaded discussions are the "lifeblood" of her online math courses. I have found similar success by using threaded discussions to engage students in thought provoking dialog and collaboration in my online EDUC 5400 Special Education Seminar for Principals course. Engaging students in threaded discussions alleviates the feelings some students have of hanging out there alone in cyberspace.

Since the course is designed to promote leadership, I empower my students to take charge of the threaded discussions to further develop their leadership skills and to share ideas and resources with their peers. For 13 of the 15 weeks of the course, students participate in active threaded discussions around assigned readings that are designed to support students' learning to develop: (a) an ability to lead school-wide conversations about problems and issues that arise in special education in ways that strengthen the culture of the school and its commitment to all students' learning; and (b) an ability to garner resources for the school's programs. I inform my students that I will closely monitor their discussions but that I will limit my participation to minimize influencing the discussions. However, I do add at least one small entry weekly to the discussion to let students know that I am also a participant.

Prior to the start of class, I email students a syllabus that includes the course assigned readings, ranging from 2 to 6 assignments per week (see Table 1). Students are instructed to email me their 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choice for reading assignments and select a week that he/she wishes to facilitate the discussion and write a reading response paper on the assigned reading. Students must read selected assignments, identify major themes of the readings, and summarize the readings. I tell students to do the following:

Think of this paper as a conversation with the author and with your classmates. Why are the issues you picked troubling / exciting / interesting / important to you? Figure out how to invite your readers to think along with you about themes/issues you identified in the readings. Post your paper (first day of the week) in the appropriate "Reading Response" discussion week, and also place your paper in the "Reading Response" drop box for a grade. Click below on URL to listen to video instruction.

<http://www.screencast.com/users/dgarris/folders/Jing/media/573b231a-c28e-4534-aa97-2b60c8e50b4f>

Table 1. Reading Assignment from Syllabus

<p>2 Week of January 26</p>	<p>Principals' knowledge or lack of knowledge in special education</p>	<p>Reading 1a: Garrison-Wade, D. (2005). Principals' training or lack of training in special education: A literature review. In C. L. Fulmer & F. L. Dembowski (Eds.), <i>National summit on school leadership: Crediting the past, challenging the present, and changing the future</i> (pp. 235-241). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.</p> <p>Reading 1b: Wakeman, S.Y., Browder, D.M., Flowers, C. & Ahlgrim-Dezell, L (2006) Principals' knowledge of fundamental and current issues in special education, <i>NAESP Bulletin</i>, 90(2), 153-174.</p>
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After the student uploads his/her reading response paper in the drop box, I review it and offer feedback; then he/she is instructed to upload it in the threaded discussion area. This assignment counts for 15% of student's grade. Table 2 below is a rubric I used to grade students reading response paper and leadership of the discussion. The rubric is very helpful in providing immediate feedback to students. In addition to the rubric, I add written feedback on their performance. At the end of the week of discussion, I add the points to the student grade for leading the discussion. I find this to be an effective strategy for encouraging students to stay engaged in the discussion during the entire discussion.

Table 2. Grading Criteria for Reading Response & Facilitation of Threaded Discussion

Point Value	Criteria
___/4	Identified and summarized key themes and issues
___/4	Raised key questions and clearly presented personal perspective
___/5	Engaged readers in threaded discussion and responded to questions
___/2	Used appropriate language, mechanics in written response paper
Total ___/15	

All students are encouraged to read all the assigned reading to participate in a critical dialog of the readings. In order to get full credit for participating in the threaded discussions on the weekly reading response papers, students must engage in a minimum of 8 weekly threaded discussions (20% of their grade). I have found, like others (Brescia, 2005), that when I didn't assign minimum requirements, some students would take the opportunity only to post a few times.

Many students tell me via email and/or through my end-of-course evaluation that the online threaded discussion is the most valuable part of the course. They share their experiences, resources, and even invite their peers to visit their schools in these discussions. Like my students, I also find it to be the most rewarding part of the class because I also learn so much from them. Several students commented,

- I found online classes difficult to get into genuine discussions because I like the face-to-face interactions. However, Dr. Garrison-Wade set it up so that we were sharing in the reading and facilitating the discussions. She has selected practical and high-level texts which added to the discussions.
- I loved how our professor got involved in the discussion also and pushed our thinking around some critical issues.
- The threaded discussions were the most effective for me. It helped to share our experiences and learn from one another. I also liked the fact that there were topics assigned to each discussion.
- The online discussion helped us connect with our classmates even though it was an online course.

Using research to inform my teaching

Over the past four years that I have been teaching this course, I have become so fascinated with the threaded discussion and what I have learned from the students. As a result, I decided to conduct an exploratory study, *Quest for Inclusive Leadership*, to examine the knowledge acquisition of students in my EDUC 5400 Seminar in Special Education online classes. The purpose of this exploratory study is two-fold: (1) To determine what students' perceptions are on inclusive education coming into the class, and (2) To determine the impact of the class in shaping students' leadership practices outside of class. I plan to use existing data generated from four semesters of the course.

From the study, I hope to determine students' views on and perceptions of inclusive education; students' understandings of the Response to Intervention (RtI) initiative; how students understanding vary from different schools and/or school districts; if the class is promoting inclusive leadership; and the impact the class had on inclusive practices outside of the classroom setting. I'm excited about all the possibilities of how this research can inform my teaching and support my research outreach.

In conclusion, while a threaded discussion isn't a new concept, it can be in my experience effectively used to support students' learning by creating a collaborative interactive environment. In addition, it offers a space that promotes critical dialog and discussions to alleviate some of the isolation that may come from attending an online class.

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Bio

Dorothy F. Garrison-Wade, PhD is an Assistant Professor of Administrative Leadership and Policy Studies in the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Colorado Denver. She teaches courses in principal preparation and licensure. Dorothy's professional work includes experience in public and private schools as a principal (secondary), assistant principal, counselor, teacher (secondary). She's committed to offering high quality instruction that addresses the needs of diverse learners. Recently, she received the Campus-wide and SEHD 2008 Excellence in Teaching Award (Teaching Tenure-Track) and the 2007 Colorado TED Excellence in Teacher Educator Award.

Chapter 8

Instructional Uses of Twitter

Joanna C. Dunlap



Patrick R. Lowenthal

Learning Management Systems (LMSs) are modeled after classrooms. While they are fully capable of supporting some learning activities (e.g., information and document sharing, asynchronous and synchronous discussion, and online tests and quizzes), they are incapable of supporting others. For instance, LMSs currently cannot support the just-in-time, and sometimes playful, interactions that happen before and after class, during a break, and so forth. Out-of-the-classroom interactions like these have potential instructional value (Kuh, 1995) and can help strengthen interpersonal relationships between and among faculty and students. In the following chapter, we briefly highlight some instructional uses of Twitter—a Web 2.0, microblogging tool.

Social Presence and Online Learning

Social presence is a concept well established in the online education. It refers to the “ability of participants in a Community of Inquiry to project their personal characteristics into the community, thereby presenting themselves to other participants as ‘real people’” (Garrison et al., 2000, pp. 89). Short, Williams, and Christie (1976), originally developed it to explain the effect telecommunications media can have on communication, social presence was used to describe the degree of salience (i.e., quality or state of “being there”) between two communicators using a communication medium. It took on new importance with the rise of computer-mediated communication (CMC) and later online learning (Lowenthal, in press, 2009). Social presence is now a central concept in online learning; researchers have shown—to varying degrees—a relationship between social presence and student satisfaction (Gunawardena, 1995; Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997; Richardson & Swan, 2003), social presence and the development of a community of learners (Rourke, Anderson, Garrison, & Archer, 2001; Rovai, 2002), and social presence and perceived learning (Richardson & Swan, 2003).

Faculty have tried different ways to establish and maintain social presence within an LMS (e.g., incorporating audio and video, posting instructions, and providing frequent feedback; see Aragon, 2003 or Lowenthal and Parscal, 2008, for more strategies) as well as different ways to do it using tools outside of an LMS (e.g., DuVall, Powell, Hodge, & Ellis, 2007) investigated using text messaging to improve social presence).

Social Presence and Twitter

Despite the success faculty have had establishing social presence with the tools contained in an LMS, these tools seem inherently limited to some degree because they reside within the online system. Communication between and among students and faculty is scheduled based on when they have a moment to login to the LMS. Because of this, there are many lost opportunities during the day to interact and connect. Further, limiting all social interaction and connection opportunities within a LMS results in a lose of informal, free-flowing, just-in-time banter and chit-chat that we have with

students in our on-campus courses—the banter that helps us get to know each other, experience our personalities, and connect on a more emotional level.

We have tried to address this within the LMS by incorporating weekly fun activities (e.g., coming up with captions for goofy photos, or competing in online games), establishing discussion forums on non-academic topics, having students produce music playlists for the week, and the like. However, these strategies do not seem to do enough to enhance social presence.

And then we started using Twitter. Twitter (see <http://www.twitter.com>) is a multiplatform Web 2.0, application part social networking - part microblogging tool, freely accessible on the Web (Stevens, 2008). According to the Twitter website,

Twitter is a service for friends, family, and co-workers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent answers to one simple question: What are you doing?

The people who participate in the Twitter community, however, use it for more than providing updates on their current status. In 140 characters or less, people share ideas and resources, ask and answer questions, and collaborate on problems of practice; in a recent study, researchers found that the main communication intentions of people participating in Twitter could be categorized as daily chatter, conversations, sharing resources/URLs, and reporting news (Java et al., 2007). Twitter community members post their contributions via the Twitter website, mobile phone, email, and instant messaging—making Twitter a powerful, convenient, community-controlled microsharing environment (Drapeau, 2009). Depending on whom you choose to follow (i.e., communicate with) and who chooses to follow you, Twitter can be effectively used for professional and social networking (Drapeau, 2009; Thompson, 2007) because it can connect people with like interests (Lucky, 2009). And all of this communication happens in real-time, so the exchange of information is immediate (Parry, 2008a; Young, 2008). If you are still having a problem getting your head around Twitter, view the following video cast our colleagues in CU Online at the University of Colorado Denver have created about Twitter: <http://www.techheds.com/2008/07/11/techheds-video-cast-1-twitter/>

Twitter in Action

Faculty have recently begun experimenting with using Twitter in the “classroom” (Parry, 2008a). Parry explains that despite his initial skepticism, he found that Twitter can be an effective tool in the classroom in part because of its ability to “blur the lines of the classroom” (Parry, 2008b). An example of how Parry uses Twitter in his classroom can be found online (see: <http://outsidethetext.com/trace/38/>). Communication faculty are not the only one’s using Twitter in the classroom; Twitter has also been used in public relations (Sweetser, 2008), project management (Keefer, 2008), medical education (van den Broek, 2009), language learning (Ullrich, Borau, Luo, Tan, L. Shen, & R. Shen, 2008), and information systems (Sendall, Ceccucci, & Peslak, 2008) courses, to name a few.

During the fall of 2008, we incorporated Twitter into our online instructional design and technology courses. We did not require students to participate, but invited them to join us in our Twitter adventure as we tested its instructional potential. Although not everyone chose to participate, most did with positive results. The following describes our students’ typical experiences using Twitter:

- A student is reading something in the textbook and has a question about the chapter on multimodal learning. She immediately tweets (i.e., posts) her question to the Twitter community, and gets three responses within ten minutes—two responses from classmates, and one from Joni (her professor).
- A student is working on an assignment and is wondering about embedding music into a slideshow presentation. He tweets a question to the group and a practicing professional points the student to different online resources that explain how to embed music. Within a half hour, the student has embedded music in his slideshow presentation.
- A student sends a private tweet (i.e., a private message that only the named recipient receives) to Joni regarding a difficult situation with a project team member. While in the middle of a meeting, Joni immediately tweets back, arranging a time to talk with the student outside of Twitter.
- A student finds a great video about storyboarding on YouTube and posts the URL to Twitter. Her find is retweeted (i.e., reposted) three times because others also think the video is great and worth sharing.
- Joni and Patrick, who are both away at conferences, tweet various updates about what they are hearing and seeing at the conference.
- A student tweets that she is tired and going off to bed. She receives two tweets back from classmates wishing her a good night.

By using a tool that enables just-in-time communication with the local (our course) and global (practicing professionals) community, we were able to engage in sharing, collaboration, brainstorming, problem solving, and creating within the context of our moment-to-moment experiences. Because of Twitter's ability to enable persistent presence (Siemens, 2007), our social interactions occurred more naturally and immediately than when we have to login to the LMS, navigate to the appropriate discussion forum, post a message, and then waiting for someone to respond (after we already moved on to other work, thoughts, and issues). For another instructional example of Twitter in action, see <http://teachingpr.blogspot.com/2008/01/48-hours-of-twitter-class-assignment.html#links>

Other Instructional Benefits of Twitter

Besides the benefit of enhancing the potential for positive social presence during online learning opportunities, Twitter has other instructional benefits:

- **Addressing student issues in a timely manner.** Our students used Twitter for time-sensitive matters: to ask us for clarification on content or assignment requirements, notify us of personal emergencies, and alert us to issues that need our attention and action.
- **Writing concisely.** Because a tweet is limited to 140 characters, this encouraged students to write clearly and concisely. Although a very informal writing style, it is a professionally useful skill for students to develop, especially given the growing popularity of this category of communication tool.
- **Writing for an audience.** Although Twitter elicits open sharing and an informal writing style, it is nevertheless critical to know your audience and share accordingly. Participating in the Twitter community helped our students learn to be sensitive to their audience, and make professional decisions about what perspectives and ideas they should publically contribute and what perspectives and ideas should remain private.

- **Connecting with the professional community of practice.** A great benefit of participating in Twitter was that many practicing professionals also participate, including the authors of two of our textbooks. Besides the networking potential, students received immediate feedback to their questions and ideas from practicing professionals, which served to enhance their understanding of our course content and their enculturation into the professional community of practice.
- **Maintaining on-going relationships.** Although the semester is over, we are still in daily communication with several students from the courses. This allows us to continue to advise students academically and professionally.

Possible Drawbacks

Twitter, like other Web 2.0 tools, is not appropriate for all instructional situations. For instance, Twitter can be time-consuming, addictive, and possibly even encourage bad grammar as a result of its 140-character limit (Grosbeck and Holotescu). Further, faculty and students alike might prefer not to be a part of each other's social network. See Grosbeck and Holotescu (2008) and Lavallee (2007) for a complete list of drawbacks of using Twitter for educational purposes.

Conclusion

We set out to enhance the social-presence potential of our online courses using Twitter. Overall, we found that Twitter helped us accomplish this. We have found Twitter to be a powerful tool for establishing informal, free-flowing, just-in-time communication between and among students and faculty, and with the professional community at large.

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Bios

Dr. Joanna Dunlap is an associate professor of instructional design and technology at the University of Colorado Denver. An award-winning educator, her teaching and research interest's focus on the use of sociocultural approaches to enhance adult learners' development and experience in postsecondary settings. For over 13 years, she has directed, designed, delivered and facilitated distance and eLearning educational opportunities for a variety of audiences. She also works in the Center for Faculty Development as the Faculty Fellow for Teaching, sharing ideas about teaching with online and on-campus faculty across the university.

Patrick Lowenthal is an Academic Technology Coordinator at CU Online at the University of Colorado Denver. He is also a doctoral student studying instructional design and technology in the School of Education and Human Development. His research interests focus on instructional communication, with a specific focus on social and teaching presence, in online and face-to-face environments. In addition, he often writes about issues and problems of practice related to post-secondary education. He has a MA in Instructional Design and Technology as well as a MA in the Academic Study of Religion. Patrick has been teaching and designing instruction since 1998 and teaching online since 2003.

Chapter 9

Using Audio for Giving Feedback to Project Teams: A Useful Complement to Track Changes

Brent G. Wilson

The Problem – Giving Good Feedback

I come to distance learning from two vantage points – as a practitioner and as a researcher. And from both perspectives I look for strategies that won't take too much time, but are appreciated by students. Assignments are probably the top concern of students—that is, what's required and how to do well in class. Feedback on work submitted is probably the next major concern of students. They want a good grade. But just as important, they want to know the instructor's response to their papers and projects, and how they can improve that work. This is especially important for my master's students because they publish their work online as part of a professional portfolio. If there are weaknesses in a paper or project, students want to fix them before putting the paper or project online for the whole world to see.

Over the years, I have used a variety of means for giving feedback, primarily relying on Track Changes in Microsoft Word. The upside of using this type of feedback is the specific attention to fixing the text; the downside is that I fear many students just hit Accept All and don't really learn much from the feedback. Using Track Changes also takes a lot of time on my part. While I've found it is good for the technical details, I have found that it is sometimes not as good at conveying my overall response to a paper. In the following pages, I will briefly describe my experience using audio feedback as a solution to this problem.

The Response – Audio Feedback

Given the previously mentioned problems, I have been experimenting with different ways of giving students good feedback on their papers and projects. The following outlines my latest effort to give quality feedback.

1. **Print out reports.** Because reading on-screen is fatiguing to my aging eyes, I print out major projects and papers, often done in teams by groups of 3-5 students.
2. **Write comments.** I sit down at home or on the bus and write comments on the material. I sometimes fix technical problems, but often just add comments on the margin or at the front or back – as I think of an issue or problem in the report. Every instructor does this in his or her own particular way.
3. **Record spoken feedback.** Once I am get back at my computer, I use Audacity (Mac or PC) or GarageBand (Mac) to record a 1-3 minute audio file responding to the report. I pull out a particular paper, look it over to remind myself of its contents, then hit Record and start talking. I continue talking as I turn pages and go over particular sections. I mention technical/mechanical issues if they were a problem, but usually focus on conceptual or strategic issues. I do all the papers in succession. Most audio files are a single take; once in awhile I start over if I am not happy with my expression.

4. **Enter grade.** I register a grade into the gradebook system, typically within our course-management system (CMS).
5. **Send out grade and feedback.** I then send the audio file via email or post it in the CMS, along with a few written summary comments and notice of grade. I invite response and follow up with students about the work as needed.

For hybrid classes, I return the printed paper or project that has my written comments on it at the next face-to-face session. For fully online classes, if a paper needs special attention, I usually return the paper or project with Track Changes on it; otherwise I depend on oral feedback to address changes needed. Less often, I make a pdf copy of my hand-written comments and return it to the student via email attachment.

Results – Students Really Like It

I have done this in three different classes, and students consistently voice appreciation to me for the audio feedback. Their comments convey the following sentiments:

- Good to hear your personal response to our work – I felt better connected to you
- I could hear you turning pages as you spoke – I could follow along with my own copy
- The grade made better sense after hearing your explanation
- I understand better what I was supposed to do, after doing it, and hearing your comments on my work
- We discussed your comments as a group and could see ways to revise the project for our portfolios

I have come to think of audio feedback as an essential part of my classes, even face-to-face courses (since I do not always have time in class to sit down and discuss each student's work). Audio feedback is another way to establish my “teacher presence” – that feeling students have of being connected to me.

The Research Backs Me Up

There is a line of research showing the value of audio feedback for English instructors, predating the Web (Olson, 1982). Instructors can better convey nuances through spoken feedback and a clearer sense of caring (Mellen & Sommers, 2003). The positive effective has continued into the current generation of web-based courses (Ice, Curtis, Wells, & Phillips, 2007; Kim, 2005; Still, 2006). The technical term for audio feedback seems to be asynchronous audio communication or AAC (Oomen-Early and colleagues, 2008).

Future Plans

I am convinced that students benefit and appreciate the close attention to projects, papers, and reports. Audio feedback helps them understand my qualitative reaction to their work, which can complement or sometimes replace a Track-Changes form of review. My next goal is to try using VoiceThread for giving feedback. VoiceThread allows the audio annotation (or video for that matter) of papers and documents. So students would be able to view the screen and identify the particular part of the paper that I'm referring to. This may be overkill for simple summary feedback. But it may be

very useful for micro-level feedback. For more on this, see Neil Stephenson's blog *Thinking in Mind* (2009, February 20) in the reference list.

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Bio

Brent G. Wilson is professor of Information and Learning Technologies at UCD, with research interests around designing good instruction. How can we support teachers in creating powerful learning experiences, and students in using learning tools and resources? Brent consults with schools, districts, and firms about ways to improve their training/education systems, particularly in their use of e-learning flexible-learning resources. Brent has published four books and more than 100 papers on topics in instructional design and learning technologies.

Chapter 10

Wordle...just for phluff?

Joanna C. Dunlap

I have been using a fun (and quite popular) online tool called Wordle (<http://www.wordle.net>). Wordle is a Web 2.0 tool that produces images of word collections, as known as word clouds. For example, I created a Wordle image as a main page graphic (sometimes called a course banner) for one of my online courses. The following is a simple word cloud that summarizes what I write about on my professional blog, Thoughts on Teaching (<http://thoughtsonteachingjdunlap.blogspot.com/>):



Note: For a larger view, see <http://www.wordle.net/gallery/wrdl/336976/thoughtsonteaching>

Different Ways of Creating a Word Cloud in Wordle

You can create a word cloud with Wordle in one of three ways: (a) You can create a word cloud from a list of terms; (b) You can create a word cloud by entering a URL to a blog; or (c) You can create a word cloud from tags used in a del.icio.us account. Once you create the word cloud, Wordle gives you a few options to be able to change the look and feel of the word cloud (note: play with the “Randomize” button to see different options). Once you are happy with your word cloud, you can print it and/or save it to the public gallery. Wordle also provides the HTML code needed to add the word cloud to your blog or home page.

In the example, some words – such as teaching – are larger than others because they are included in the word list more frequently than others. To illustrate, if I were creating a Wordle image to represent the concept of baseball, my initial list of terms for this concept would include: baseball, bat, field, hat, player, umpire, glove, stadium, fans, hotdogs, popcorn, etc. This list would produce a Wordle image in which all of the words were the same size, indicating that they were of equal importance in

understanding the concept of baseball. However, from my perspective, the word baseball is more important to understanding the concept than hotdog or popcorn. Therefore, I would modify the list as follows to make sure baseball was the most prominent word in the Wordle image: baseball, baseball bat, baseball field, baseball hat, baseball player, baseball field, and so on. With the revised list, the most frequently used word is baseball, so it would be the largest word in the Wordle image. In this way, I can easily illustrate word strength and importance within a list of words if desirable.

Instructional Uses of Wordle

While Wordle is fun and can be used to produce course banners, Wordle can also be used for other instructional purposes. For example, I have asked students to produce Wordle images that represent their understanding of a reading, topic, concept, or idea. Then, I ask small groups of students to debrief their images together to discuss what terms they selected and why, why some terms are larger than others (or what terms should be larger than others because they are more important), and so on. A variation is to limit the number of words students (working as individuals or in small groups) can use to describe a complex concept (e.g., constructivism, freedom, diversity), and have them create a Wordle image that captures the essence of the concept with exactly 20 words. I have also used it to create word collections and asked students to determine how the words are connected, and what topic or concept is described by the collection. These types of activities encourage students to reflect on a topic or concept and articulate their understanding based on that reflection.

Wordle can also be used during class introductions, specifically in online courses. Instead of asking students to share a bio, students can produce a Wordle image that summarizes who they are, likes and dislikes, hobbies, and so on. Again, it is a fun way to encourage reflection, articulation, and sharing.

So be sure to check out Wordle! Whether you use it to produce images for your online courses, to spice up your PowerPoint presentations or for any of the reasons I mentioned above, I am sure you will find that Wordle is not only fun and creative but can be a great instructional tool for your online and face-to-face courses.

Bio

Dr. Joanna Dunlap is an associate professor of instructional design and technology at the University of Colorado Denver. An award-winning educator, her teaching and research interest's focus on the use of sociocultural approaches to enhance adult learners' development and experience in postsecondary settings. For over 13 years, she has directed, designed, delivered and facilitated distance and eLearning educational opportunities for a variety of audiences. She also works in the Center for Faculty Development as the Faculty Fellow for Teaching, sharing ideas about teaching with online and on-campus faculty across the university.

Chapter 11

A Teaching Video Project Brought to Closure

Farah A. Ibrahim

My research focuses on cultural issues in counseling and psychotherapy. I began a project years ago to develop a series of training videos on “Counseling Muslims in the West” in an effort to help train counselors on how to counsel Muslims. Like all video projects, this project involved a great deal of up-front planning and preparation. Specifically, I had to do a significant amount of research in preparation for this project since my research in the past had not focused on Muslims, the religion, or the cultures in which Islam practiced. I struggled with how to approach this video. I strongly believe that issues of religion, spirituality, and culture are mediated by culture and context. As a result, I wanted to create an effective and useful video while at the same time wanted to avoid imposing my own Western thinking on Islam and Muslims. These are common concerns that any educator thinks about when he or she is dealing with a multicultural audience.

After extensive research, I began the training video project. I developed an introduction and four vignettes. The introduction and four vignettes were then successfully recorded with the help of several doctoral students and then edited and produced by a videographer. Once the videos were complete, we conducted a summative evaluation. Reviewers’ feedback suggested that the videos were too short and that they should be expanded to adequately address the subject matter. This meant that segments of the videos would have to be re-recorded to expand the presentation. Unfortunately, I ended up accepting a job at a new university. As a result, this project was put on hold for some time.

Time flew by and I was not able to return to the project until I began working about it at the University of Colorado Denver. One benefit of video projects is that they can often stand the test of time. However, even with the increased access to digital video recorders and desktop video editing tools, editing and producing video’s requires a certain skill set. Having no funds or grants when I arrived at the University of Colorado Denver (UCD), I was not sure how I was going to get the project completed.

After working at UCD for a year, I finally contacted Brian Yuhnke in CU Online to see how CU Online could help me complete this project. CU Online decided to support the project and help me to complete it. The timing could not have been better because I had an upcoming training workshop on “Counseling Muslims” at the annual conference of the American Counseling Association in which I could use these videos.

Finally, after four years, we were again on the road to project completion. Brian and his staff came and helped finalize the recording of two new segments. They also edited the original video and added the new segments in time for the conference. Finally, they helped upload and host the videos online. The video was a success!

One of the usefulness of video is that it can be used again and again in multiple contexts. In addition to using the videos in professional trainings and workshops, I have also used the videos in my courses here at UCD. Students in both my Multicultural counseling and my Advanced Multicultural Counseling courses have been able to view it and as a result better understand my recommendations about multicultural

responsiveness as a result of these videos. As we know, a picture is worth a thousand words! Each of the videos can be viewed online:

- **Counseling Muslims – Introduction**
http://video.cudenver.edu/users/fibrahim/CounselingMuslims_Intro.wmv
- **Counseling Muslims – Case 1**
http://video.cudenver.edu/users/fibrahim/CounselingMuslims_Case1.wmv
- **Counseling Muslims – Case 2**
http://video.cudenver.edu/users/fibrahim/CounselingMuslims_Case2.wmv
- **Counseling Muslims – Case 3**
http://video.cudenver.edu/users/fibrahim/CounselingMuslims_Case3.wmv
- **Counseling Muslims – Case 4**
http://video.cudenver.edu/users/fibrahim/CounselingMuslims_Case4.wmv

I am very grateful to Brian Yuhnke and the staff at CU Online for helping me complete this project. They were supportive and very professional. It was truly a pleasure working with them. I was pleased to find out when I came to UCD that teaching projects like mine would be supported. Such assistance makes teaching and developing innovative projects a joy!

Bio

Farah A. Ibrahim is a professor in the Counseling Psychology and Counselor Education Program in the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Colorado Denver. She is a fellow of the American Psychological Association (Society for Counseling Psychology), a licensed psychologist and the Book Review Editor for the International Journal for the Advancement of Counseling. She is a South Asian immigrant and her research has focused on issues of culture in counseling, identity development, student development, immigrants, and organizational behavior. At UCD she teaches the following courses: Group counseling (with a culture and gender emphases), Multicultural counseling, Advanced Multicultural Topics (Focus, cultural assessment in counseling and psychotherapy), Mental health Diagnosis, Counseling theories, Introduction to School Counseling, Fieldwork / Practicum in School Counseling, and Internship. Her current research projects include empirically assessing the efficacy of teaching for multicultural group work, and multicultural counseling courses.

Chapter 12

Improving the Design of PowerPoint Presentations

Patrick R. Lowenthal

The use of PowerPoint has become ubiquitous; whether in a corporate meeting or a classroom, PowerPoint is commonplace. In fact, it is estimated that over 30 million PowerPoint presentations are given each day. The use of PowerPoint has increasingly received criticism regarding its misuse and overuse. The most notable critic of PowerPoint is Edward Tufte. In *The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint*, Tufte (2003a) spends 27 pages highlighting various shortcomings of PowerPoint. In a later article, Tufte (2003b) even compares PowerPoint to a prescription drug whose side effects “induced stupidity, turned everyone into bores, wasted time, and degraded the quality and credibility of communication” (para 1). In the following chapter, I briefly revisit some of the constraints of PowerPoint and then focus on a few message design principles I apply when creating PowerPoint presentations to alleviate or minimize possible issues or constraints.

Constraints of PowerPoint

Bad PowerPoint presentations are commonplace. Whether it is the speaker who reads the slides line-by-line, the presenter who is not sure how to advance each slide or the presentation where the slides are difficult (if not impossible) to read, we have all sat through—and perhaps even given—some bad PowerPoint presentations. Tufte has turned these common PowerPoint problems into an incisive critique of PowerPoint of the tool. (2003a). He begins by pointing out how PowerPoint’s low resolution makes it difficult to display information-rich data. Tufte though isn’t alone; critics and supporters alike (Anderson & Sommer, 1997; Sommer, 2003; Tufte, 2003a) agree that PowerPoint’s low resolution makes it difficult to display information-rich or visually-rich data with text alone. In fact, PowerPoint users are very familiar with running out of space on a PowerPoint slide. This problem leads many to put too much text on a slide or create presentations with hundreds of different slides. Another problem is that PowerPoint defaults to and encourages the use (and overuse) of bullet outlines which Tufte (2003a, 2003b) contends dilutes thought, narrative, and data. Tufte also criticizes PowerPoint for being deeply hierarchical and linear. The deeply hierarchical and linear structure of PowerPoint no doubt *influences* how one uses PowerPoint and delivers presentations. Finally, Tufte argues that PowerPoint encourages users to be more preoccupied with format, conspicuous decoration, and phluff rather than on the content of the presentation (see Lowenthal & White, 2008, for a review of Tufte’s *The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint*).

Regular users of PowerPoint can probably identify a number of other constraints of PowerPoint use. For instance, I have argued before that PowerPoint can often encourage teacher-centered, screen-centered, and technology-centered instruction (Lowenthal, 2005). However, it is important for us to remember that like any piece of technology, PowerPoint has affordances and constraints. Despite the shortcomings of day-to-day use, PowerPoint is not inherently evil—nor is it neutral. Others have pointed out that many of the problems associated with PowerPoint are typically more the presenter’s fault than the software application itself (Doumont, 2005).

While many of the shortcomings of PowerPoint use can be worked around (e.g., the low resolution of PowerPoint can be addressed by using less text, more information-rich images, and giving out handouts), there comes a time when we must realize that certain presentations—whether because of context or audience or a number of other factors—might be improved by not using PowerPoint.

Improving the Design of PowerPoint Slides

Many of PowerPoint's problems could be alleviated with proper forethought and planning—and most importantly, knowing when not to use it. There are essentially three phases involved in conducting a PowerPoint presentation: (a) creation of the PowerPoint presentation; (b) presenting the PowerPoint presentation; and (c) distributing the PowerPoint presentation. While the focus of this chapter is primarily on the creation phase, the way we design our PowerPoint presentations often influences how we present it and therefore we must think about all three phases every step of the way.

The ACE model is a cyclical process used to create instructional visuals (Lohr, 2003) that I use to help me design effective PowerPoint presentations.. ACE stands for analyze, create, and evaluate. I have found the ACE model is a very useful guide when creating PowerPoint presentations or any type of instructional visual. We typically do not think of PowerPoint presentations as instructional visuals, but good PowerPoint presentations are just this--instructional visuals connected through a narrative. Therefore, I will briefly elaborate on each component of the ACE model.

Analyze

The first step in the ACE model is to analyze. We should begin by asking ourselves, "What do our learners need to know and be able to do?" and "How can PowerPoint help accomplish this?." There are times when using PowerPoint might be very appropriate (e.g., when giving a keynote), but there are times (e.g., when leading a small intimate meeting--like round table session at a conference) when PowerPoint is most likely not only inappropriate but also possibly even problematic because of the distance it can create between a presenter and his or her audience.

Part of this stage of the model involves analyzing one's audience. Among other things, understanding one's audience helps in deciding whether PowerPoint is an appropriate tool to use. Knowledge of one's audience should also help one determine the look and feel of the overall presentation as well as the basic content. In addition to analyzing one's audience, faculty should also spend time analyzing where they will be giving the PowerPoint presentation (i.e., the learning environment). This is easier done when one teaches in the same classroom week by week. However, I have often found myself giving a presentation for the first time in a strange room where I run into the unexpected (e.g., lights that don't dim appropriately). While there are a number of rules of thumb one can follow when creating PowerPoint presentations (e.g., the 10/20/30 rule—states that you should use only 10 slides, talk for no more than 20 minutes, and never use a font smaller than 30 points--see Kawaski, 2005, for more on this rule), they all tend to assume a "typical" learning environment. But whether I decide to use a 20 point font or a 40 point font should depend more on the learning environment (or my audience) than on some rule of thumb. For example, a 40 point font is probably perfect for a keynote address but too large for an online course where learners will be reading the slides on a computer screen in front of them. Further, some environments (whether a classroom or a presentation hall) are not conducive for PowerPoint presentations (e.g.,

they might not have an LCD projector) and this should be taken into consideration before a presentation is ever given. Therefore, the main things to consider during the analyze phase are your purpose, audience, and environment.

Create

The second step of the ACE model involves creating the instructional visuals. This involves deciding both the structure and focus of the presentation as well as the design and make-up of each slide. (A thorough discussion of alternative ways to create PowerPoint presentations is beyond the scope of this chapter; see Duarte's (2008) *slide:ology: The Art and Science of Creating Great Presentations* or Reynolds (2008) *Presentation Zen: Simple Ideas on Presentation Design and Delivery* as two great books that do this very well.) While I hope one day to be able to implement some of the great ideas of Duarte (2008) and Reynolds (2008), in the mean time, I have focused on implementing a few key message design principles when creating my PowerPoint presentations.

Instructional visuals must be legible. We have all seen (and many of us have created) presentations with unreadable slides. This common mishap is due in part to the lack of emphasis and thought placed on the design of the message (or in this case the slides). For more on instructional message design, see the works of Winn (1993) and Lohr (2003). However, Williams (1994) perhaps takes the simplest approach to explaining basic design principles. Williams coined the term CARP, which stands for contrast, alignment, repetition, and proximity. Adhering to the principles of CARP can help create legible and professionally looking instructional visuals.

- *Contrast* or rather the lack of contrast is often the number one visual problem of most PowerPoint presentations. A PowerPoint presentation can do little good if your audience cannot see or read the slides. A simple approach like using a white background and a black font or a black background with a white font yields the highest contrast.
- *Alignment* is important when it comes to readability. Studies have shown that fully centered text, especially multiple lines of it, is harder to read than text that is aligned left or right. Therefore, maintaining a left justification throughout your presentation can promote readability.
- *Repetition* is important because the brain recognizes patterns. Using consistent and repetitive headings, titles, font, as well as backgrounds, helps improve the readability of your slides. A storyboard or a design guide can help you keep track of things such as the font size and font type of headings vs. body text of each slide. This is helpful because by default PowerPoint will automatically change the font size (e.g., to accommodate more text on a slide) when creating PowerPoint presentations.
- *Proximity* is important because it helps a reader understand, through chunking, what information is related together. Chunking items that are related spatially helps the viewer. This can become a challenge in PowerPoint because PowerPoint by default equally spaces every line of text.

Finally, Williams and others have identified the important role fonts can play when designing presentations or any instructional visuals. A basic Sans Serif font (e.g., Arial or Verdana) is perhaps the most readable and safest bet. While fancier fonts can add aesthetic value, they can at the same time make it harder to read the message on each

slide. Further, presenters should avoid using all CAPS whenever possible; all caps is harder to read. The brain recognizes patterns and words and sentences in all caps are harder to read because they do include any ascenders or descenders. The brain uses these to quickly identify words.

But it is interesting to note that one study found that simply rehearsing the presentation is more important than the format of slides or overheads (Carello, 2002). This suggests simply following a few message design principles is not enough to ensure good presentations—rather, it is just a first step.

Evaluate

Evaluation is perhaps the hardest part of Lohr's model to follow. Part of the appeal of using PowerPoint is the ability to continually reuse and repurpose a lesson. The evaluation step in the ACE model suggests that faculty need to collect some data to determine whether or not the instructional visuals—in this case, the PowerPoint slides—are working. This is not just a matter of asking whether or not students enjoyed the slides and/or the presentation (which is still helpful to know) but also whether or not the PowerPoint presentation is helping students learn. Some ways that you can evaluate the effectiveness of your presentation and use of PowerPoint is through the use of polling (e.g., www.polleverywhere.com) or clickers.

Conclusion

The work of Tufte (2003a; Tufte, 2003b), Norvig (n.d.-a, n.d.-b), and others is powerful and persuasive. Any novice PowerPoint user should be required to read the work of Tufte. Tufte, though, focuses a great deal on the tool. He seems to blame a piece of software for the way that we are using it. PowerPoint does not give bad presentations; people give bad presentations. While recognizing the role presenter's play in bad PowerPoint presentations, Tufte argues that PowerPoint is becoming more than just a tool but rather a cognitive style.

PowerPoint is so engrained in our culture that there is an unspoken expectation that in certain environments, one must use PowerPoint. Try to imagine doing a paper presentation at many major conferences without PowerPoint. You will be labeled a luddite or even worse- technologically illiterate. Or imagine giving a PowerPoint presentation and not handing out the PowerPoint slides. When a tool becomes this deeply ingrained in a culture, it becomes more than just a tool. However, this does not dismiss the fact that how people use PowerPoint is still very much in their control. I outlined, in this chapter, a few steps faculty can take to begin creating and using PowerPoint differently. However, over time, my hope is that faculty and students alike (including myself) begin leveraging the full multimedia capabilities of PowerPoint and begin using it as the multimedia tool it is rather than simply an electric overhead that only contains text. Finally, I hope that faculty begin to experiment with different ways of using PowerPoint whether that be through adopting a fun micro-talk format like Pecha Kucha, creating PowerPoint games, or through developing non-linear web-based learning environments in PowerPoint.

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Bio

Patrick Lowenthal is an Academic Technology Coordinator at CU Online at the University of Colorado Denver. He is also a doctoral student studying instructional design and technology in the School of Education and Human Development. His research interests focus on instructional communication, with a specific focus on social and teaching presence, in online and face-to-face environments. In addition, he often writes about issues and problems of practice related to post-secondary education. He has a MA in Instructional Design and Technology as well as a MA in the Academic Study of Religion. Patrick has been teaching and designing instruction since 1998 and teaching online since 2003.

Part 3

Emerging Tools and Applications

Audacity

audacity.sourceforge.net

Free open source audio editor and recorder

what is it?

Audacity, according to its website, is "a free and open source software for recording and editing sounds." This simple to use application enables users to record audio and edit audio clips. Further, you can import audio files recorded elsewhere and edit at will in Audacity. Some of Audacity's features include multi-track mixing, noise removal, multi channel modes and much more.

educational use?

There are a number of educational uses of Audacity but perhaps the most obvious is the ability to record and edit lectures. Similarly, faculty could require students to use Audacity to record themselves doing such things as making presentations. Further, faculty could use Audacity to give audio feedback on student's work in hybrid or online courses (see Chapter 9).

pros & cons?

It's hard to find any drawbacks to using Audacity. It is cross-platform (Mac Os X, Windows and Linux), free, and easy to use.

what's it cost?

Free to use.

alternatives?

Apple's GarageBand (<http://www.apple.com/ilife/garageband/>) and Adobe's Soundbooth (<http://www.adobe.com/products/soundbooth/>) are two alternatives to Audacity. While GarageBand is part of Apple's iLife suite and comes free with all new Macs, Soundbooth must be purchased separately and currently costs about \$200.

resources?

Audacity Help Documentation

<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/help/documentation>

Audacity Tutorials

<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/manual-1.2/tutorials.html>

Audacity Wiki Tutorials

<http://audacityteam.org/wiki>

Blogger

www.blogger.com

Share your thoughts with everyone

what is it?

Blogger is a free blogging application that enables you to create a personal blog and then share your thoughts to the rest of the world. A blog or a weblog is usually a website where one can frequently update and add comments, video, images, much like one's personal diary. However, people often use a blog or Blogger for much more due to its quick and easy ability to create and publish content online.

educational use?

Educators have been using blogs for educational purposes for a number of years now. Perhaps the most notable use of a blog or Blogger is to provide students an opportunity to reflect and analyze course material. However, rather than keeping student's thoughts and ideas behind lock and key in a course management system (CMS), blogging provides students an opportunity to connect with a larger professional community while creating content for others. Further, introducing blogs and blogging into the classroom can help teach students about the value of not only writing but also reading blogs.

pros & cons?

Blogger is free and quick and easy to set up. Perhaps the only limitation to Blogger is the lack of control you have to completely redesign the look and feel of the blog. Further, unlike its competitor WordPress, Blogger cannot be hosted on one's own web server.

what's it cost?

Blogger is free.

alternatives?

A notable and, one might argue, even popular alternative to Blogger is WordPress (<http://wordpress.org> or <http://wordpress.com>).

resources?

7 Things You Should Know About Blogs

<http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7006.pdf>

Blogs in Plain English

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NN2I1pWXjXI>

How to Create a Blog with Blogger

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnploFsS_tY

Uploading a Video with Blogger

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnzlOYaeOwU>

Bubbl.us

www.bubbl.us

Brainstorm and create mind maps online

what is it?

Bubbl.us is a free and easy to use web application that lets users brainstorm online. With it, you can create colorful mind maps, share and collaborate with others, embed your mind maps into websites, and email, print, or download the mind map for later.

educational use?

Bubbl.us can be used by faculty to brainstorm with their colleagues or their students. Bubbl.us can also be used to illustrate complex relationships and it can even be used for students to brainstorm and collaborate with each other. Essentially, as a mind mapping tool, Bubbl.us can be used similarly to other mind mapping tools.

pros & cons?

Bubbl.us is free, easy to use, and offers users the ability to collaborate on mind maps. Perhaps the only drawback to Bubbl.us is that it offers users very few formatting options.

what's it cost?

Bubbl.us is free to use.

alternatives?

Traditional desktop-based alternatives include Microsoft Visio (<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/visio/>) and Inspiration (<http://www.inspiration.com/>). However, there are other Web 2.0 mind mapping alternatives like MindMeister (<http://www.mindmeister.com>).

resources?

Bubbl.us Basics: Brainstorming and Mind-mapping Online
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AllXU_3nktU

MindMapping with Bubbl.us
<http://revver.com/video>

Bubbl.us Demo
<http://www.watchthetutor.com/tutorials/bubbl.us/bubbl.us.html>

Delicious

www.delicious.com

Keep your web bookmarks online and share them

what is it?

Since the beginning of the World Wide Web, users have bookmarked their favorite sites inside their browser. But what happens when you want to search through your bookmarks or find a site when you are away from your computer?

Delicious simplifies these tasks by storing your bookmarks online and making them searchable. From any Web browser on any computer, you can add a bookmark, look up a book mark and easily share bookmarks with others.

educational use?

Because Delicious makes it easy to store and organize bookmarks using a tagging system, the tool encourages you to bookmark more! Adding tags relevant to your research and teaching area makes it easy to pull up and share bundles of links relevant to a subject area. So, for example, tagging sites with "online education" or "Web.20" makes it easy to find and share individual or groups of links related to those subjects.

Publishing tools allow you to share "link rolls", or lists of links related to topic, right on your Web site or inside your online course. You can also have students add links to a course-dedicated Delicious account.

pros & cons?

Because you can import your browser-based bookmarks into Delicious, getting started is a breeze. Web-browser-specific plugins make adding a page to Delicious as easy as clicking on a button. You can also search the bookmarks of like-minded people on Delicious. There really are not any drawbacks to Delicious.

what's it cost?

Delicious is absolutely free to use.

alternatives?

Social bookmarking and annotation site Diigo (<http://www.diigo.com>) offers many of the same features of Delicious, but is more complex to use. However, Diigo does offer a few features that Delicious does not (e.g., you can highlight the web and add sticky notes with Diigo). Other less notable sites are faves (<http://faves.com>), Yahoo Bookmarks (<http://bookmarks.yahoo.com>), and Google Bookmarks (<http://www.google.com/bookmarks>).

resources?

Social Bookmarking in Plain English Video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x66lV7GOcNU>

Top 10 ways to use delicious

<http://www.lifehack.org/articles/technology/top-10-ways-to-use-delicious.html>

Facebook

www.facebook.com

A social network that allows people to connect and share with their friends, family and colleagues

what is it?

Facebook is a social networking tool that connects people—whether friends, family, or colleagues. Once you create your free account, you can set up your personal profile, which includes the ability to add information about your life (e.g., where you work, hobbies, political beliefs, etc), pictures, videos, and much more. You then can join networks organized by cities, schools, or regions as well as personally select people to be your “Friend.” People you add as Friends on Facebook (and who accept being your friend) can then follow you on Facebook—which essentially means that they are notified (depending on their settings) when you update your status on Facebook (e.g., by writing something on your wall or posting new pictures). Facebook is currently the leading social networking site based membership.

educational use?

While companies like Blackboard are finding ways to synchronize with Facebook, educators are experimenting with how to use Facebook for educational purposes. There is no question that Facebook can connect people and learners but it’s unclear whether students want their “social” and “educational” spaces connected. Regardless, Facebook provides faculty and staff great ways to connect with other professionals in their field.

pros & cons?

Perhaps the best thing about Facebook is its overall popularity. It seems like every day more and more people are on it and as a result Facebook enables you to connect with just about anyone. It is also very easy to post and share pictures and videos on Facebook. Finally, Facebook enables you to start an instant chat with other people online in Facebook. Many of the strengths of Facebook, though, could just as easily be seen as drawbacks. For instance, the overall popularity of Facebook is likely to lead to its demise. And finally, Facebook can be a very open platform and anything you say on Facebook can be seen by your “friends.”

what’s it cost?

Facebook is free to use

alternatives?

Popular alternatives to Facebook are MySpace (<http://www.myspace.com>) and LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com>).

Resources?

Social Networking in Plain English
<http://www.commoncraft.com/video>

Facebook for Educators
<http://vimeo.com/2310388?pg=embed&sec=>

Flickr

www.flickr.com

Upload, organize and share your photos and videos online

what is it?

One of the first photo hosting services, Flickr remains one of the most popular. Upload your photos and videos, add captions, organize them into sets and mark them public or private. Flickr worries about storing the images and you worry about who gets to see what.

educational use?

Need to share visual material in class? Flickr makes it easy to upload and store your assets. Then, you can link to them inside your course or embed directly into your blog. Set up a Flickr account for your class and allow students to email visual assignments directly to Flickr. Post your vacation pictures for the family and a video of an experiment for your class.

pros & cons?

Flickr is by far the best photo hosting and sharing application out there. However, despite its strengths, there are a few things it could do better. For instance, other image hosting sites make it easier to embed images and videos directly on the page. Further, the free Flickr account limits the number of images you can upload in a month, the total size of uploads and only gives you access to the last 200 images you have uploaded.

what's it cost?

Flickr gives you the option to set up a free account or a pro account. For \$25 a year, however, you can set up a pro account which gives you things like unlimited uploads, unlimited storage, and ad-free browsing and sharing.

alternatives?

Other popular media hosting services include Picasa (<http://picasa.google.com>) or Photobucket (<http://photobucket.com>) for images and YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com>) for video.

resources?

Online Photo Sharing in Plain English

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPU4awtuTsk>

Newbie's Guide to Flickr

http://news.cnet.com/8301-17939_109-9703620-2.html

Flickr Video Tutorials

http://etc.usf.edu/te_mac/movies/flickr.html

7 Things You Should Know About Flickr

<http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7034.pdf>

Google Docs

docs.google.com

Create, edit and share documents online

what is it?

Google Docs is a lightweight Web-based suite of office applications that includes a word processor, a presentation tool, and a spreadsheet tool. While it won't replace Microsoft Office any time soon,, it can change the way you think about collaborative work. All three of the Google Docs tools supports multiple authors editing the same document, presentation, or spreadsheet at the same time, tracking revisions and showing, near real time, what each author is doing. Because the documents are stored online, they are available on any computer connected to the Internet. Import and export options allow you to upload Word docs, Excel, PowerPoint and PDFs (to name a few) and output back in the same format. You can also quickly publish what you create online with a click of a button.

educational use?

Students can use Google Docs to coordinate group work, including group papers. Instructors can easily monitor individual contributions using Docs's revision tracking tools. Likewise, faculty can simplify collaborative paper writing with colleagues by sharing the same document with multiple authors without the worry of coordinating various individual versions.

pros & cons?

With Google Docs, simple formats are best. Because this is a Web-based application, sophisticated formatting functions that you might use in Microsoft Word, or more advanced formulas available in a tool such as Excel, are simply not available at this time. But the ability to collaborate real time on documents makes these feature tradeoffs worthwhile.

what's it cost?

GoogleDocs is free.

alternatives?

Zoho (<http://www.zoho.com/>) provides a growing variety of Web-based applications, including word processor, spreadsheet, presentation tool and more. Adobe Buzzword (<http://www.adobe.com/acom/buzzword/>) is another alternative.

resources?

Google Docs in Plain English

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRqUE6IHTEA>

7 Things You Should Know About Google Apps

<http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7035.pdf>

Google Docs Help

<http://docs.google.com/support/>

Google Reader

google.com/reader

Track hundreds of Websites easily, from a single Web interface

what is it?

The proliferation of Websites makes keeping track of what is new feel like a full time job. Who has the time to scan hundreds, if not thousands, of new web pages every day?

Google Reader helps simplify your daily scan of the Web by aggregating RSS feeds. RSS is a machine-readable version of the Website that Google Reader uses to quickly show you a summary of what was posted recently on the site. By subscribing to a Website's RSS feed, and then organizing many feeds into groups inside Google Reader, you can easily skim through hundreds of posts in each category. Click on a promising article and Reader shows you the entire posting.

Think of Google Reader as the daily digest of the Websites you want to read.

educational use?

Every teacher and researcher struggles to keep up with all of the relevant information in their area. The widespread use of RSS and now common distribution of content over the Web makes Google Reader a primary ally in the daily management of information. Using Google Reader lets you stay up to date with more information, taking less time. Also, sharing your Reader feeds is a great way to help students find out what sites they might consider following.

pros & cons?

Different sites implement RSS differently. Most sites have an RSS link or button that you can click to add a feed to your Reader account. But not always. Some new users might find getting their Reader account configured the way they want it a bit of a challenge. But once you have your Reader being feed, scanning and reading is a snap.

what's it cost?

Google Reader is does not cost a dime.

alternatives?

Bloglines (<http://www.bloglines.com>) and FeedDemon (<http://www.feedException.com>) are two popular alternatives to Google Reader. And there are others. Which RSS reader you choose ultimately depends on the features and interface you like the best.

resources?

Google Reader in Plain English

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSPZ2Uu_X3Y

RSS in Plain English

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSPZ2Uu_X3Y

iSpring

www.ispringsolutions.com

Quickly convert PowerPoint presentations to flash

what is it?

iSpring is a free PowerPoint to Flash converter that can be downloaded and added as an add-in to PowerPoint 2003 or 2007. According to its web site, iSpring "creates web-friendly Flash movies from your PowerPoint content keeping its visual parameters and animation effects. iSpring Free works within PowerPoint, transforming it into fast and easy Flash authoring tool. Just click Quick Publish and iSpring will generate a Flash movie from your PowerPoint presentation in a few seconds." By converting PowerPoint presentations into flash movies, you can easily distribute your presentations cross platform and cross browser thus making your presentations optimized for the web and accessible to others via the Web or other websites like SlideBoom (<http://www.slideboom.com>).

educational use?

iSpring enables faculty to easily convert PowerPoint presentations--especially those with narration, audio, or video--into Flash movies to easily upload to the web. While PowerPoint enables users to save a PowerPoint as a webpage, these advanced features are typically lost when a user uses this feature in PowerPoint. iSpring however maintains these advanced features when it converts the PowerPoint into a flash movie. Further, iSpring can be used to convert non-linear PowerPoint presentations into hypermedia, flash-based, learning modules. That is, through the integration of iSpring in PowerPoint, educators can essentially create flash-based websites (or learning modules) in PowerPoint.

pros & cons?

The major benefit of iSpring is that its free and easy to use. There are alternatives but they can cost \$100s. The biggest weakness to iSpring is that it's only available for Windows users; this is actually a common trend though with PowerPoint-to-Flash converters in general.

what's it cost?

There is a free version of iSpring as well as a pro version for \$249 and a Presenter version for \$449—each with increased functionality. They offer an educational license as well.

alternatives?

Articulate Presenter (<http://www.articulate.com>) is perhaps the best known alternative; however, Articulate Presenter is very expensive. Other alternatives are authorPoint (<http://www.authorgen.com>) and Impatica (<http://www.impatica.com/imp4ppt/>).

resources?

5 suggestions on how to choose a PowerPoint to Flash converter
http://www.ispringsolutions.com/articles/5_practical_suggestions.html

Jing

www.jingproject.com

Capture, annotate, and narrate your screen

what is it?

Jing is software that you can download and install on your computer to take pictures of your screen, record videos of your onscreen action, and share instantly. Once installed on your Mac or Windows-based PC, Jing enables you to not only take pictures of your screen (i.e., take screen shots) but it also enables you to annotate the pictures and then either upload to screencast.com or download and then share with others. If you prefer to record your onscreen action, Jing enables you to make short (less than 5 minute) videos which can be narrated to illustrate important concepts to others. Once complete, the videos also can be uploaded to screencast.com or downloaded and distributed as you see fit.

educational use?

Jing can be used educationally in a number of ways. First, faculty and/or students can record short presentations with Jing and then post them online to share with others. Jing can also be used to demonstrate complex and technical things. Jing can also be used as a way to provide audio/visual feedback to students on their work. And finally, Jing can be used to provide faculty, staff, and students technical help when needed.

pros & cons?

There are a number of benefits to using Jing. First, Jing is free. Second, Jing is available for Windows and Mac. Third, the ability to upload images and videos to screencast.com with a simple click of a mouse is something that none of its competitors currently offer. Despite all of its benefits, there are some drawbacks to Jing. First, videos are restricted to only 5 minutes in length. Second, Jing videos cannot be edited in Jing. Third, the free version only exports videos as swf files.

what's it cost?

There is a free and a pro version of Jing. The Pro version, which costs \$14.95 a year, offers users the ability to record in MPEG-4, upload straight to YouTube and remove the Jing logo from the beginning and end of videos.

alternatives?

Jing combines the basic functionality of a screen capture software like Snagit and screen recording software like Camtasia. Power-users, though, will quickly find that Jing alone is not enough to complete all projects. Tools like Snagit (<http://www.techsmith.com>), Camtasia (<http://www.techsmith.com>), or other notable alternatives like Captivate (<http://www.adobe.com/captivate/>) or CamStudio (<http://camstudio.org/>) will offer Power-users more functionality when Jing no longer meets their needs.

resources?

Jing Overview

http://video.techsmith.com/jing/latest/demo/jing_overview_video/jing_overview_video.html

Media Converter

www.mediaconverter.org

Convert Youtube videos into mp3 files

what is it?

MediaConverter is a web-based tool that allows users to convert files from one format to another. Users can either type or copy/paste a URL to a piece of web-based media or upload an individual file to MediaConverter. MediaConverter then converts the file into a file of one's choice. Users have over 30 different file formats to choose from. After the file has been converted, a user can then download the converted file and distribute it as needed. Converting media from one format to another has never been easier.

educational use?

Media Converter can help faculty and students in a number of ways. While keeping in mind the importance of adhering to all copyright laws, MediaConverter can enable faculty to download YouTube videos to use for future use (e.g., when giving a presentation in which Internet access is not available) or to convert videos into audio format (e.g., convert an interview into a mp3). Further, MediaConverter can also be used to convert a video from one format to another to enable faculty, staff, or students to do things such as insert a video into a PowerPoint presentation when their original video is in an unsupported format.

pros & cons?

The biggest weakness to MediaConverter (like other similar web sites) is that from time to time it appears unable to convert certain files into a different format.

what's it cost?

The basic features of MediaConverter can be used for free. However, users can purchase a premium account on a weekly basis (for as little as \$4 a week) or for up to a year (for \$150) to get access to such things as unlimited conversions and better video quality.

alternatives?

Other popular alternatives to MediaConverter are CometDocs (<http://www.cometdocs.com>) Zamzar (<http://zamzar.com>), and ListentoYouTube (<http://listentoyoutube.com>).

MyPodcast

www.mypodcast.com

Record, publish and broadcast podcasts

what is it?

MyPodcast is a free tool that makes it easy to record, publish, and air podcasts. While MyPodcast can be used by both PC and Mac users, their free podcast recorder is only available for PC users. The free recorder is designed to easily help users record and upload podcasts to the mypodcast web site. Once podcasts are uploaded to the mypodcast.com, whether they were recorded with the mypodcast.com recorder or another tool of choice (e.g., Audacity or GarageBand), they are then published live on the Web for others to subscribe to and listen.

educational use?

MyPodcast can be used to record audio lectures or other audio resources for faculty, staff, or students. It can also be used as a place for students to upload audio presentations on specific topics.

pros & cons?

The biggest strength of mypodcast.com is how easy it makes it to record and upload podcasts. After downloading the mypodcast.com recorder and plugging in a microphone, a podcast you can record and upload the recording to the Web in minutes. There are two notable weaknesses of mypodcast.com. First, mypodcast.com inserts advertisements into podcast episodes. Second, the free recorder application that helps take the mystery out of podcasting is only available for PC users.

what's it cost?

mypodcast.com is a free application.

alternatives?

There are not many good alternatives to mypodcast.com. However, some alternatives include BlogTalkRadio (<http://www.blogtalkradio.com>), iTunesU, odiogo (<http://www.odiogo.com>), hipcast (<http://www.audioblog.com>), and Gcast (<http://www.gcast.com>).

resources?

Podcasting tips

<http://engage.doit.wisc.edu/podcasting/deliver/index.html>

An Introduction to iTunes U

<http://www.apple.com/education/guidedtours/itunesu.html>

Ning

www.ning.com

An easy to set up and easy to use community blog

what is it?

By now, everyone has heard of blogs and Facebook. But what happens when you want to put together a group blog or social network of your own? Ning is the answer. This free service allows you to set up public or private community blogs. Each member has their own profile, can keep their own blog, post to the group blog, add pictures, comments and more. Further, like social networking sites, Ning enables you to set up discussions and chats with other members.

Easy to use, Ning has become a popular site for coordinating and sharing information from professional organizations and hobby groups to family sites and event coordination. Focused on the development and coordination of social networks, Ning is a perfect tool to help people get together on a topic.

educational use?

What happens when the semester ends? How do you help develop a cohort of students? Ning provides an answer. By giving students a safe place to meet and share ideas, a Ning allows groups of students and faculty to continue to connect outside of class.

Likewise, faculty coordinating research or publishing work with colleagues might find Ning's publishing platform a perfect solution for staying in touch.

pros & cons?

As a free tool, it's hard not to like Ning. Still, there are tools missing from Ning that you might find in a site like Facebook.

what's it cost?

Ning is free to use however you can pay to add premium services such as more storage or bandwidth and to run your site without Ning-controlled ads.

alternatives?

The idea of creating community-based social networking Web sites has driven a lot of development in the past few years. Microsoft SharePoint remains a popular enterprise solution. Other alternatives are sites like Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>), Collaber (<http://www.collaber.com>), and DeskAway (<http://www.deskaway.com>).

resources?

7 things you should know about Ning
<http://educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7036.pdf>

How to create your own social network on ning
http://webtrends.about.com/od/ning/ss/create_ning.htm

PBworks

pbworks.com

Build knowledge collaboratively

what is it?

Everyone knows about Wikipedia--the collaborative, online encyclopedia written and edited by anyone with the time to help out. PBworks (formerly known as pbWiki) is one of a number of commercially hosted wiki sites that gives you Wikipedia-like functionality in an easy-to-use format.

Define your users, set up the basic structure, and invite people to contribute and create. Share pages with individual users or the public at large.

educational use?

A wiki is a perfect tool for coordinating and monitoring group work. Likewise, a growing number of faculty have begun to use wiki sites to collaborate with colleagues on research and papers. Building a repository of knowledge on a specific topic across multiple semesters is another job perfect for a wiki.

pros & cons?

While PBworks is only one of a wide range of wiki solutions, its easy-to-use interface and dedicated support make it a popular option for educators. While the free version limits access to some of the features, it allows you to easily get a taste for how a wiki works.

what's it cost?

There is a free and a paid version of PBworks. The paid version currently runs \$100 per year per classroom.

alternatives?

When PBworks doesn't provide the tools you need, consider a MediaWiki (<http://www.mediawiki.org>) installation. But beware: MediaWiki is the software behind the Wikipedia, and it is as powerful as it is complicated to use! Other easy-to-use Wikis are Wikispaces (<http://www.wikispaces.com>) or Wetpaint (<http://www.wetpaint.com>).

resources?

What can PBworks do for you?
<http://pbworks.com/content/viewdemo/>

7 Things You Should Know About Wikis
<http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7034.pdf>

Wikis in Plain English
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-dnL00TdmLY>

Picnik

www.picnik.com

Photo editing tool made easy

what is it?

Picnik is a fun and easy tool to edit your photos online. This powerful little editor allows you to fine tune your photos and add effects, fonts and remove red-eye all within the web browser. Picnik enables you to search for images online, upload individual photos to edit, or even connect with your Flickr, Picasa, or Photobucket accounts.

educational use?

Picnik is so versatile that faculty, students, and staff can utilize this as a teaching, learning, and research tool. Whether you need to create a banner for your online course or find and edit instructional visuals, Picnik makes it easy to find or upload and edit your pictures.

pros & cons?

The best thing about Picnik is its overall simplicity and ease of use. Unlike high-end photo editing applications like PhotoShop, Picnik makes editing images quick and easy. You have the ability to pull your photos from photo sharing sites such as Flickr, Facebook, Photobucket and Picasa as well as to search for images on Yahoo. Perhaps the biggest drawback of Picnik is that like many other free applications, you have to upgrade to Picnik Premium to get access to all of its features. But despite this, the free version still gives you enough easy, yet powerful, tools to create and edit amazing images.

what's it cost?

Picnik offers a free and a premium version. The premium version costs \$24.95 per year. However, you can take advantage of most of Picnik's features with the free version.

alternatives?

Adobe Photoshop Express (<https://www.photoshop.com/express/>) and Aviary tools (<http://aviary.com/>) are some of the notable competitors of Picnik. However, these alternatives tend to mimic traditional desktop software like Photoshop more than Web 2.0 tools. As a result, they tend to be less user friendly. But the increased functionality might be worth it for some users.

resources?

Picnik Tips Videos
<http://picniktips.com>

A video on how to crop and resize an image in Picnik
<http://s159.photobucket.com/albums/t149/reshows/?action=view¤t=picnik1.flv>

ScreenSteps Desktop

www.bluemangolearning.com/screensteps/desktop/

Create visual tutorials and guides in minute

what is it?

ScreenSteps is a new application that makes creating job aids with screenshots a breeze. ScreenSteps makes capturing screenshots easy by simply clicking a button and identifying what you can want to capture. Once a screenshot is captured, ScreenSteps automatically embeds the screenshot in a document in which you can then easily add text and/or annotations as well graphical elements (e.g., arrows) as you see fit. After you are done creating your “lesson,” you can quickly export it as a pdf or HTML file. ScreenSteps essentially takes the mystery out of creating job aids/tutorials.

educational use?

Faculty, especially those in technical disciplines, regularly have to create tutorials and job aids to provide other faculty, staff, or students directions on how to do a certain task. Whether it is how to login to a Course Management System (CMS) to check their grades or how to request a book through Inter-Library Loan, faculty regularly need to create step-by-step instructions on how to do something. ScreenSteps can help accomplish this faster and easier than any other tool on the market.

pros & cons?

The best thing about ScreenSteps is how easy it makes it to create a job aid. It also enables you to create a template that others can use to ensure that every job aid has the same look and feel. Finally, it enables users to export the job aids in multiple formats and its cross-platform (Win & Mac). Perhaps the only drawback to ScreenSteps is that it offers both a free, standard and a more feature-complete Pro version.

what's it cost?

The standard version currently costs \$39.95 and the pro version costs \$59.95

alternatives?

While there are a number of screen capturing applications out there (e.g., SnagIt), there currently are not any real alternatives to ScreenSteps.

resources?

ScreenSteps Demo

<http://www.viddler.com/explore/bluemango/videos/2/0.356>

Creating a Manual with ScreenSteps Pro

<http://www.viddler.com/explore/bluemango/videos/3/1.48>

Songza

www.songza.com

A music web search engine and internet jukebox

what is it?

According to its web site, Songza is a "music search engine and internet jukebox". Songs are pulled from YouTube and played through the site. Clicking on search will pull in your results where you can play, share, rate (quality of audio), and add to a playlist.

educational use?

While music and pop-culture are often not thought of as instructional tools, music is fundamental to all cultures and can be used educationally in a number of ways. It can be used to increase social presence in online courses—through having students share a personally meaningful song and explain why the song is important—as well as increase content interaction—for example through having students build playlists to illustrate specific points. Finally, it can be used as an ice breaker by having students do such things as creating a soundtrack of their life.

pros & cons?

Songza's strength lies in its simplicity. It's easy to use and share individual songs as well as to create playlists. It also makes it easy to post songs to Twitter or Facebook. However, Songza's biggest drawback is its near complete reliance on YouTube. This results in a more limited song selection (compared to its competitors) as well as a larger amount of live music. Another drawback is the inability to create multiple playlists.

what's it cost?

Songza is free to use.

alternatives?

There are a number of notable alternatives to Songza. In fact, for individual use, many prefer Pandora (<http://www.pandora.com>), FineTune (<http://www.finetune.com>), or LastFM (<http://www.last.fm>). Other alternatives are BlipFM (<http://blip.fm>) and Live Music Archive (<http://www.archive.org/details/etree>).

SkyDrive

skydrive.live.com

Store and access your files from anywhere

what is it?

SkyDrive is a free online file storage application that is a part of the Windows Live suite. SkyDrive gives users 25 GB of free, password-protected, storage on Windows Live. Users can store and share files and photos with others. Once uploaded, users can access their files from anywhere. Users can create folders and store files in individual web-based folders.

educational use?

Faculty can use SkyDrive to store important files that they need to access from anywhere. Whether manuscripts, research, or course-related files, SkyDrive can host and store files in one easy to access central location. Faculty can also then share these files with other colleagues or students as needed.

pros & cons?

The best thing about SkyDrive is the huge amount of free storage it gives users. Another benefit is the stability of the company; Microsoft is most likely not disappearing anytime soon. Things like this need to be considered when thinking about putting your important documents online. One major drawback to SkyDrive is that it cannot be mapped as a network drive in Windows.

what's it cost?

SkyDrive is free to use.

alternatives?

There are a number of alternatives to SkyDrive but perhaps the two most notable are DropBox (<http://www.getdropbox.com>) and Box.net (<http://www.box.net>)

resources?

SkyDrive Overview

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1VGaB57txms>

List of Online File Storage Tools

<http://techmagazine.ws/free-online-file-storage/>

Skype

www.skype.com

A powerful video and voice application

what is it?

Wikipedia describes Skype as "a software application that allows users to make telephone calls over the internet." But Skype offers much more than that. In addition to making telephone calls, users can use Skype to make video calls, to send instant messages, and to transfer files from one computer to another. But as Wikipedia illustrates, Skype is best known for its ability to let people make free calls from one computer to another—anywhere in the world. While most calls are free (depending on the service options you select) when they are made to other computers, calls can also be made to mobile devices or landlines for a fee.

educational use?

Skype can be used as a means to connect users from around the world.. This free and easy to use application can connect colleagues, students, faculty, and researchers all within a web browser. So whether it's for office hours or to help students complete group work online, Skype is a great tool for any educator.

pros & cons?

The best thing about Skype is the ability to make free phone calls (with or without video). Some drawbacks of Skype however are that it does not support emergency calls (i.e., 911), calls may be dropped from time to time (depending on your internet speed), and that some organizations might block the use of Skype on their network.

what's it cost?

The cost of Skype varies depending on use. However, basic computer-to-computer phone calls can be made for free.

alternatives?

While none of the following are truly complete alternatives to Skype, some options include Adobe Connect (<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobatconnectpro/>), Google Chat (<http://www.google.com/talk/>), Jajah (<http://www.jajah.com/>), and iCall (<http://icall.com/>).

resources?

Skype Video Tutorial

<http://forum.skype.com/index.php?showtopic=41492>

7 Things You Should Know About Skype

<http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7032.pdf>

Twitter

www.twitter.com

Connect with people in a micro-blog format

what is it?

According to Twitter's web site, "Twitter is a service for friends, family, and co-workers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent answers to one simple question: What are you doing?" Daily Twitter users however will argue that Twitter is much more. In 140 characters or less, people share ideas and resources, ask and answer questions, and collaborate on problems of practice. One can post to Twitter in a number of ways—including, the Twitter website, one's mobile phone, email, and instant messaging. The power of Twitter though lies in who you follow and who follows you.

educational use?

Twitter can be used for educational purposes in a number of ways. Faculty can use it to address student issues in a timely manner (in similar ways that one might use a class email list), to encourage students to work on writing concisely, to increase social presence in online learning environments, and to connect with other professionals in their community of practice.

pros & cons?

Twitter's strengths are its ease of use and its anytime anywhere capabilities. Perhaps Twitter's biggest weakness is its increase in popularity. This increase in popularity has generated negative press as well as increase interest by spammers. Further, Twitter (like other social networking tools) can be addicting.

what's it cost?

Twitter is free. However, if you use it on your cell phone, you might incur fees if you don't have a text messaging and/or data plan.

alternatives?

Other microblogging tools include Jaiku (<http://www.jaiku.com/>), Tumblr (<http://www.tumblr.com/>), MySay (<http://www.mysay.com/>), and Hictu (<http://www.hictu.com/>) and Edmodo (<http://www.edmodo.com>).

resources?

Twitter TechHeds Videocast
<http://www.viddler.com/explore/techheds/videos/1/>

Twitter in Plain English
<http://vimeo.com/757146?pg=embed&sec=>

Twitter Cheat Sheet
http://portfolio.ginaminks.com/job_aides/twitter_cheat_sheet.pdf

Ustream

www.ustream.tv

Broadcast live from your webcam

what is it?

According to Ustream's website, "Ustream.Tv is live interactive video for everyone." So what does this mean? Well, Ustream is a web application that allows users with a computer and a camera such as a webcam to stream live video on the Web and thus broadcast to the world. In addition to broadcasting yourself live, Ustream has additional features such as chat rooms, the ability to record broadcasts, and the ability to embed content.

educational use?

There are a number of educational uses of live broadcasting. First, tools like Ustream can enable faculty to broadcast their lectures live to the world. Second, faculty can use Ustream to have guest speakers broadcast live to their class. Third, Ustream can be used to broadcast conferences or workshops to a larger audience. In addition, faculty and students can browse the thousands of live streams on Ustream for educational content. There are a number of other possibilities of using Ustream that faculty could consider, including broadcasting student work, or research.

pros & cons?

The benefits of using tools like Ustream are the overall ease. One can be up in minutes broadcasting to the world and even record the broadcast for later use. The biggest possible drawback is the need for a high speed connection. Further, you might find that certain features are blocked on your campus (e.g., the chat tool does not work when one is on campus at the University of Colorado Denver).

what's it cost?

Ustream is free to use.

alternatives?

Justin.tv (<http://www.justtv.com>) is perhaps the best known alternative to Ustream. However, Mogulus (<http://www.mogulus.com>) in many ways gives users even more functionality than either Ustream or Justin.tv.

resources?

Capitalizing on Streaming Video
<http://www.ustream.tv/about>

Ustream Video Convert and Upload Tutorial
<http://revver.com/video>

7 Things You Should Know About Ustream
<http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7042.pdf>

VoiceThread

www.voicethread.com

VoiceThread is a powerful way to share images, documents, videos and audio commentary with others

what is it?

VoiceThread is a web-based tool that enables users to create multimedia slide shows by uploading images, documents, and videos to the web and then to comment on these with one's voice, text, audio, or video. A VoiceThread can then be shared with others. A VoiceThread can also be embedded on websites (e.g., a blog or a course management system) or downloaded and archived.

educational use?

Faculty and students can use VoiceThread in a number of different ways. For instance, faculty can use VoiceThread to provide audio feedback to students. Faculty can also use VoiceThread to create digital stories about themselves or course content. Similarly, faculty can have students create digital stories as alternatives to traditional PowerPoint presentations.

pros & cons?

The benefits of VoiceThread lie in its ease of use and its unique way to allow people to comment on the VoiceThreads created by others. The biggest drawback to VoiceThread is that one really needs a pro account (which currently costs \$60 a year) to get the full use of the tool. Currently with the free version, you can only create 3 and store 3 VoiceThreads at a time.

what's it cost?

VoiceThread has free and paid versions. The pro version currently costs \$59.95 a year.

alternatives?

While there are tools like SlideShare (<http://www.slideshare.net>) that enable one to upload and share a PowerPoint presentation, there are not any alternative tools that can do exactly what VoiceThread can do.

resources?

What is a VoiceThread video?

<http://voicethread.com/?#home.b409>

VoiceThread tutorials

<http://voicethread.com/?#c28>

YouTube

www.youtube.com

Record, upload, share and view video clips

what is it?

YouTube is a video sharing website that enables users to upload video clips to the Web. Videos uploaded to YouTube can be accessed and viewed by a select group of users or open for anyone to view. Users can also view, comment, rate, embed, and link to their videos as well as the millions of other videos posted to the site. Signing up for YouTube is free and easy. Further, even if you do not plan to upload your own videos, signing up for an account enables you to bookmark your favorites and to create playlists.

educational use?

YouTube has become one of the largest repositories for video on the Internet, making it a great resource for educators. Faculty and students can often find dozens, if not hundreds, of videos about the topics of their choice. YouTube has recently partnered with several universities and launched YouTube EDU focusing on university related videos and lectures. YouTube is also a great tool for creating personalized content allowing faculty to record lectures, introductions, commentary and more.

pros & cons?

The benefits of YouTube is that it is free, easy to use, supports high definition (HD) content and users can set their videos to public or private. The only major drawback of YouTube is that it limits users to uploading videos that are 1gb or less than 10 minutes in length. One other minor drawback is that a video can be removed from YouTube at any time throughout the semester.

what's it cost?

YouTube is free and does not cost anything to use.

alternatives?

There are a number of alternatives to YouTube—namely, Vimeo (<http://www.vimeo.com>), Viddler (<http://www.viddler.com>), Meta café (<http://www.metacafe.com>), TeacherTube (<http://www.teachertube.com>). However, YouTube is by far the most popular video hosting and sharing tool out there.

resources?

How to upload a video to YouTube

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_O7iUiftbKU

Help Resources

<http://help.youtube.com>

YouTube Help Videos

<http://www.youtube.com/user/YouTubeHelp>

Zotero

www.zotero.org

Zotero is a free and easy way to collect, manage, and cite research

what is it?

According to its web site, "Zotero [zoh-TAIR-oh] is a free, easy-to-use Firefox extension to help you collect, manage, and cite your research sources. It lives right where you do your work—in the web browser itself." More specifically, Zotero enables one to automatically capture citations, store pdfs/images/web pages, cite from within Word or OpenOffice, take notes, and access one's library of sources from anywhere.

educational use?

While Zotero can be used for teaching and learning purposes (e.g., by giving students access to a course dedicated Zotero account), educators will likely get more use out of Zotero for collecting, managing, and citing resources in preparation for teaching and / or scholarship they are conducting.

pros & cons?

Zotero enables user's quick and easy ways to collect and manage online resources. However, while new browsers are beginning to be supported, Zotero was developed as, and still is in many ways, a Firefox extension. While citations and notes can be synced and accessed from more than one computer, files are stored on one's local machine.

what's it cost?

Zotero is free.

alternatives?

EndNote Web (<http://www.endnoteweb.com>) is an alternative to Zotero however, EndNote currently does not provide the same level of functionality as Zotero (e.g., the ability to archive web pages).

resources?

Introduction video about Zotero

<http://www.zotero.org/>

A video tour of Zotero

http://www.zotero.org/support/screencast_tutorials/zotero_tour

A video demo of Zotero

http://www.zotero.org/support/screencast_tutorials/intro

Part 4

Resources

Down-and-dirty Guidelines for Effective Discussions in Online Courses

Joanna C. Dunlap

Educators who design and deliver online courses must connect with their learners as they do in their on-campus courses. They have to provide true opportunities for inspirational and meaningful learning, rather than a sterile experience of clicking within a labyrinth of links. In an online course, student engagement occurs in three distinct ways: Interaction of the student with the instructor, with other students, and with the content (Moore & Kearsley, 2005). Much of the literature on online interaction is concerned with social interaction (student-to-instructor and student-to-student) because of the criticality of social context in supporting learning and as a way to minimize student isolation and increase student motivation and retention (Ludwig-Hardman & Dunlap, 2003). Without a high-level of social presence (Anderson, 2004; Aragon, 2003; Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997), learners can feel isolated and disengaged because of a lack of communication intimacy and immediacy (Lombard & Ditton, 1997). Therefore, discussion-based activities are the bread-and-butter of many online courses.

Because of the critical role that social context plays in inspirational and meaningful learning, online courses need to include opportunities for rich and relevant discussion, supported by solid instructor facilitation and strong group participation. To achieve this goal, educators need to use strategies that (1) create a sense of learning community in which learners learn from each other and from the teacher (Palloff & Pratt, 1999; Rovai, 2002), (2) encourage the sharing of multiple perspectives (Bender, 2003), and (3) promote high quality work through collaboration and peer review (Hurst & Thomas, 2004) – without creating an instructional situation in which everyone is online constantly (Dunlap, 2005). Unfortunately, accomplishing this level of social presence in online courses – especially those courses that primarily rely on asynchronous communication technologies – is challenging, even for experienced educators.

The purpose of the following list of guidelines is to help educators new to online teaching, design, facilitate, and manage effective discussions for learners in online courses in order to establish the level of social presence needed to encourage inspirational and meaningful learning. These guidelines do not work in isolation, but work systemically together to create an effective online learning experience.

Setting Participation Expectations

1. Inform learners about your online schedule, and make sure they know how often you expect them to be online.
2. Balance discussion and other activities. Weekly discussions can get tiring, and can lose power if overused. Give everyone a break from discussions.
3. Have discussion participation count towards the final grade. (See #19 below for a strategy –Inspiration Points – that can be used to determine a participation score.)
4. If you have a large class, have smaller groups participate in a discussion instead of the whole group (e.g., if 30 students, have 3 groups of 10).
5. Share guidelines for discussions that help learners understand what it means to contribute effectively to discussions. For example, here is a “Top 10” that I provide my students before we start engaging in online discussions:
 - a. **Be direct:** Share comments, ideas, and suggestions directly with classmates.

- b. **Be specific:** When praising or commenting on others' contributions, avoid being vague. Be clear about what aspect (excerpt, portion, etc.) of the classmate's comment you are responding to. Describe how the classmate's contribution helped you understand the topic or think about the topic in a different way.
 - c. **Be non-attributive:** Do not describe a classmate's attributes but rather describe your experience of her or his contribution – the effect that her or his contribution had on you. Use “I statements” that convey your experience of the other person’s efforts.
 - d. **Share knowledge and ideas:**
 - Applications and examples from the workplace and community
 - Great tips and tricks
 - Unique resources such as useful website, books, blogs, articles, workshop information and/or technical work groups etc.
 - Relevant personal and professional experiences
 - Strategies, tools, and problem solving skills
 - e. **Encourage vision:** Present unique, insightful ideas, perspectives and questions that are thought provoking and promote further discussion. Encourage new ways of thinking that makes the group see something in a new way. Disseminate new information and knowledge about the topic being discussed. Demonstrate your ability to see beyond the obvious.
 - f. **Contribute to group's sense of well-being and harmony:** Be open to others' comments and ideas. Make statements that support and honor differences. Share thoughts and opinions with others without judgment or prejudice. Make comments that help create a healthy learning environment and inspire people to want to learn more. Make statements that mediate differences and find commonality. Make statements that lift classmates' spirits. When appropriate, share comments that draw the conversation back to the focus of the discussion topic.
 - g. **Demonstrate knowledge of the topic:** Contribute to discussions by making comments that are insightful and informed (include resources, personal experiences with a topic, and so on).
 - h. **Actively Participate:** Make an extra effort to actively participate throughout the discussion and engage classmates throughout the duration of the discussion.
 - i. **Offer Assistance:** Offer assistance to other students and help others who need extra explanation on a topic.
 - j. **Ask Questions:** Pose questions and ask for help when needed.
6. An alternative to providing learners with a set of guidelines, have learners develop the “ground rules” for discussion. Have students answer questions like:
- What is our definition of a respectful, balanced discussion?
 - How will we determine in what order people speak?
 - How do we feel about interrupting?
 - What should we do if someone dominates the discussion?
 - What should we do if we don't hear from everyone in the room?
 - What should we do if we discuss something controversial or uncomfortable?
 - What should we do if someone says something we don't like?

This activity helps students reflect on their own discussion habits, makes it clear to everyone what is expected during discussions and empowers students to stick up for themselves and others when one of the rules is violated (e.g., someone dominates the discussion or keeps interrupting others). It also gives students a chance to practice being in a discussion before they have to participate in a discussion covering a course topic, allowing them to become more comfortable with their peers and the discussion format.

Setting the Tone for Social Sharing and Community

7. Make sure learners understand the need for civility.
8. Personalize your communications. Send a personal message to each student at the start of the semester. Use learners' names in posts.
9. Share a story, related to the content of the course, if possible, that gives learners insight into your values, passions, interests and so on. Consider using a tool such as PowerPoint, VoiceThread (<http://voicethread.com>), or Jing (<http://jingproject.com>) to enhance your story with photos, images, and audio clips (including your voice) – making it a digital story, in other words. See <http://www.augustcouncil.com/~jdunlap/movie> for an example of a digital story that helps my students feel more connected to me (and therefore, more willing to share and participate in course activities, specifically discussion) while introducing an important topic of my courses – values for teaching and learning. Notice that students never see me, but hear my voice, see photos of my family and listen to me describe a life-altering event that reflects my own values around teaching and learning. Now that I have shared, the students are more open to sharing.
10. Use an icebreaker. For example, ask learners to post bios/introductions, including a list of “facts” about themselves – some true and some not true. Have learners guess which facts are false using a “20 Questions” protocol. Other examples include:
 - Completing a sentence – “I was driving my car today when I...”
 - Have students interview and introduce each other
 - Provide a hook – e.g., ask students to describe the weirdest gift they ever received
 - Play a game – e.g., sinking ship with 20 passengers, the lifeboat can hold 12...
11. Give learners non-threatening opportunities to practice participating in online discussions (using the tools, protocols, etiquette, etc.). Consider the following activities:
 - Post entertaining photos (not related to the course content) and ask learners to share their captions.
 - Similarly, send learners to a website that requires they do something and then ask them to share their experience with the group. For example, have them visit <http://trevorvanmeter.com/flyguy/> and respond to the following questions in a discussion forum:
 - What happens to you while you are there?
 - What is your favorite part of the experience?
 - Why do you think I am asking you to do these sorts of activities?
 - Have them visit the Mr. Picassohead website – <http://www.mrpicassohead.com/> – and create an artwork, then submit a link to the discussion forum. Once posted, encourage learners to comment on each other's artwork.

Launching and Structuring Discussions

12. Tie discussions to course events: projects, readings, preparing for an assessment/test, etc. And consider alternatives to the question-answer format such as role-plays, debates, case studies and games.
13. Use high-level questions that are thought provoking, hypothetical, controversial, etc. For example, ask students to complete the sentence (“What most struck me about the book we are reading is...”). Ask questions that require learners to take a position, provide a rationale for the position, present evidence to support their position, and attend to other learners’ contributions.
14. Ask follow-up questions to stimulate conversation. For example, what reasons did you have for saying this? Can you please elaborate? How do you define x? What do you think might be the implications of your previous statement? Are there alternatives to this approach?
15. Limit the number of topics/questions used to ignite a new discussion to two or three. Stack the deck in favor of deeper discussions. Post a separate message for each question.
16. Allow learners to choose which topics/questions they focus on.
17. Use provocative subject lines: “Three reasons why the author is dead wrong,” “Computers program children,” “All we need to know about teaching we can learn from skateboarders,” or “Why I love the Raiders.”
18. Don’t jump into the discussion right away. As soon as you start contributing to the discussion, it has the potential of shutting down ideas—students are less like to share alternative viewpoints. For example, if students start a discussion on Monday, I will wait until Thursday to post (and I make sure students know this is my plan so they don't think I have disappeared and I am not monitoring). This allows the students to post their original position without being swayed by me. I monitor the discussion, even though I don't post, during those first few days to get a sense of who is participating, where the discussion is going, what themes are emerging, what misconceptions need addressing, and so on. Then, on Thursday, I post to threads of discussion instead of to every individual student post. This shows students that I am attending to all of their comments, even though I do not have a 1-to-1 ratio of post/response interactions.

Giving Learners a Role

19. Have learners assess the value of discussion contributions, e.g., assigning Inspiration Points to each other. Inspiration points, modeled after the “karma points” approach used by members of the online Slashdot.org community (and similar to the valuing process used by community members of Amazon and Ebay), involve students in the evaluation of the quality of discussion contributions. The idea behind inspiration points is that the learning community, not a moderator or an instructor, should be responsible for (1) determining the value of community members’ posting in terms of helping the community achieve specific goals, and (2) awarding those valued contributions.

To make inspiration points work, I give each student a certain number of inspiration points (e.g., three) that she or he can assign to valued discussion contributions within a certain timeframe (e.g., by week’s end if online, or by the end of the evening session if on-campus). Because the students are evaluating each

other, I work with them at the beginning of the semester to establish criteria for determining “value” and then apply the criteria to their assessment of peers’ contributions and the creation of their own contributions. For example, inspiration point criteria may include sharing original ideas, writing clearly, presenting a coherent argument, providing evidence to support an argument, “listening” to others and incorporating their ideas and perspectives and so on (see below for an example of criteria).

Criteria for Inspiration Points

Here is how we will assign our allotment of inspiration points for each discussion:

- 0 points: Though you may have introduced an interesting idea or contributed to the discourse, it is not original enough, or is somehow unclear.
- 1 point: You provide a succinct, interesting, original, and well-documented argument or idea, or provide a useful link or pertinent fact.
- 2 points: Your contribution is creative and original, and compellingly argues a very clear point. You support your contribution with evidence.
- 3 points: An exceptional contribution to the discourse

Ways to Improve Chances of Receiving Inspiration Points

- Choose provocative subject lines to make our postings stand out.
- Present our own perspectives.
- Write clearly.
- Construct an argument. Provide evidence, present a rationale that supports our positions, and reference the opinions of others, linking to supplementary evidence when appropriate.
- Open up debate by remembering that the best response is one that gets people thinking, and that makes them want to reply.
- Learn from others who have posted before us by reading through the posts and referring to appropriate posts in our own.

Rules for Assigning Inspiration Points

Only award inspiration points to those who have contributed significantly to the discussion – vote trading is unacceptable. Award inspiration points based on the quality of the message, irrespective of the content of the message – vote for exceptional messages even if you do not necessarily agree with the ideas presented.

In my experience, the community-centered focus of inspiration points improves the quality of each post during a discussion because students are more reflective and thoughtful about their responses, make sure their responses are supported by evidence, and work hard to provide value to the learning community by moving the discussion

forward. By using inspiration points, I participate more in the discussion because students have taken over part of or the entire evaluation role. The inspiration points that students accumulate for their valued contributions to the discussion can be used to determine a score for class participation.

20. Have learners write a one-page (e.g., 250 word) summary of the week's (or whatever unit of time used) discussion that includes a general overview of the discussion, an excerpt of their most valuable contribution to the discussion, and an explanation for why they consider it their best.
21. Ask the learners to become discussion leaders. Alternatively, have small groups of learners facilitate a topic.

Engaging Quieter Learners

22. Use strategies such as inspiration points to encourage people to get involved.
23. Besides relevant and engaging activities, create a structure in which learners need to post by a certain time and then respond to others by a certain time.
24. Organize learners into groups to make it more likely that everyone will have a chance to participate—smaller discussion groups of between 5 and 10 learners can make room for everyone to contribute.
25. Assign people specific roles in the discussion: facilitator, questioner, summarizer, devil's advocate, and so on. Then, provide clear directions about what you do specifically when you are assigned that role.
26. Involve learners in a debate, again with very specific role assignments for each person.
27. Put a limit on the number of posts (and length) that any one individual is allowed to contribute.
28. Assign a response order/sequence and require each subsequent responder to post something that extends the previous posts.
29. Use discussion protocols to guide participation, and make sure everyone in the class has an opportunity to contribute. (See the resource - Protocols for online discussions)

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Protocols for Online Discussions

Joanna C. Dunlap

The protocols discussed in the following pages were modified from protocols described in the following two books:

- Brookfield, S. D., & Preskill, S. (1999). *Discussion as a way of teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- McDonald, J., Mohr, N., Dichter, A., & McDonald, E. (2003). *The power of protocols: An educator's guide to better practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

These revised protocols help students process readings, podcasts, videos, etc. during online discussions.

For these protocols, it is best to have students work in discussion groups of 4-5, with each group assigned to their own discussion forum. When using a protocol, it is helpful to debrief the activity with the whole group to reinforce what was learned from the discussion, and explore any remaining questions.

[Note: For all protocols, you can modify the words-per-post limit as well as the time frame. These structures are guidelines only, so modify as appropriate to your situation.]

The Final Post (asynchronous discussion)

(Modified from McDonald et al.'s *The Final Word* protocol)

Steps:

1. Each student identifies one of the most significant ideas from the reading, illustrated by a quote or excerpt. (Each student should have a back-up quote/excerpt in case another student has already posted the same quote/excerpt.)
2. Each student starts a new thread by posting the quote/excerpt from the text that particularly struck her or him. The student points out where the quote is in the text. In approximately 250 words, the student describes why that quote/excerpt struck her or him. (Specify a deadline for the original posts.)
3. Each student responds to that quote/excerpt and what the original student wrote, using approximately 150 words. The purpose of the response is to expand on the original student's thinking about the topic, to provide a different perspective on the topic, to clarify thinking about the topic, and to question the original student's assumptions about the topic. (Specify a deadline for these posts.)
4. After each student in the group has responded to the original post, the first student has the "final word." In approximately 150 words, the original student responds to what has been shared by the rest of the group, offering what she or he is now thinking about the topic, and her or his reaction to what the other students have posted. (Specify a deadline for the "final word" post.)
5. This process continues until everyone has had the opportunity to have the "final word." This means that 4-5 discussions are happening simultaneously within a particular timeframe (e.g., 1 week), or that they are happening one at a time (each discussion over 1-2 days).

The Last Post (asynchronous discussion)

(Modified from McDonald et al.'s *The Last Word* protocol)

Steps:

1. Each student identifies one of the most significant ideas from the reading, illustrated by a quote or excerpt. (Each student should have a back-up quote/excerpt in case another student has already posted the same quote/excerpt.)
2. Each student starts a new thread by posting the quote/excerpt from the text that particularly struck her or him. The student points out where the quote/excerpt is in the text, but does not explain why that quote/excerpt struck her or him.
3. The rest of the group discusses the quote/excerpt, why it is significant, what it means, and so on. Specify an amount of time for this discussion, such as 2 days.
4. After each student in the group has participated in a discussion about the quote/excerpt, the first student has the "last word." In no more than 250 words the original student shares why she or he thought it was significant, what she or he is now thinking about the topic, and her or his reaction to what the other students have posted.
5. This process continues until everyone has had the opportunity to have the "last word." This means that 4-5 discussions (depending on number of students in a group) are happening simultaneously within a particular timeframe (e.g., 1 week), or that they are happening one at a time (each discussion over 1-2 days).

Posting the Crux of the Matter (asynchronous discussion)

(Modified from McDonald et al.'s *Crux of the Matter* protocol)

Steps:

1. Set up four new threads: Sentences, Phrases, Words, and Insights. Designate a time frame for the discussion, such as 2-3 days.
2. First round: Each student posts a sentence from the reading that she or he feels is particularly significant in the Sentences thread. Each new post must be unique; in other words, if a sentence has already been posted, it should not be posted again.
3. Second round: Each student shares a phrase that she or he feels is particularly significant in the Phrases thread. Each new post must be unique; in other words, if a phrase has already been posted, it should not be posted again.
4. Third round: Each student posts the word that she or he feels is particularly significant in the Words thread. Each new post must be unique; in other words, if a word has already been posted, it should not be posted again.
5. In the Insights thread, the small group discusses what they understand about the reading based on what everyone has posted, and any new insights about the reading.

Designated Readers (asynchronous discussion)

(Modified from Brookfield & Preskill's *Designated Listeners* protocol)

1. At some point in the course, each student takes on the role of the designated reader.

2. During an online discussion, the designated reader does not contribute (except to ask for clarification of someone else's contribution).
3. At the end of the discussion, the designated reader is responsible for summarizing the online discussion. (Note: You can require a specific word count for summaries to help designated readers write concisely.)

Note: This protocol promotes active “listening” during online discussions because it requires the designated readers to read all contributions, look for themes and differing perspectives, ask clarifying questions, and summarize what has occurred during the discussion in a way that values everyone's contributions. Especially when written concisely, these summaries also serve to help the group feel a sense of closure, making it easier to move on to the next discussion.

Rotating Threads (asynchronous or synchronous discussion)
(Modified from Brookfield & Preskill's *Rotating Stations* protocol)

Steps:

1. Set up threaded discussion forums, with a different provocative issue to discuss in each forum.
2. In groups of 4-5, have students rotate to a new forum. In terms of timing, you could have each group spend one day in a forum – e.g., Forum A on Monday, Forum B on Tuesday, and so on.
3. Have each group record their ideas about the issue in the forum.
4. Once groups have rotated to each forum, give students time to revisit all of the forums to see what other groups posted.
5. As a final activity, have students summarize what they have learned about the issues.

Snowballing Threads (asynchronous or synchronous discussion)
(Modified from Brookfield & Preskill's *Snowballing* protocol)

Steps:

1. Discussion starts with small group discussions, with each small group having their own discussion forum.
2. After designated amount of time, each small group joins with another group in a new forum.
3. After designated amount of time, each larger group joins with another group in a new forum, and so on, until the whole group comes together into the same forum.

Jigsaw Threads (asynchronous or synchronous discussion)
(Modified from Brookfield & Preskill's *Jigsaw* protocol)

Steps:

1. Groups of 4-5 students become experts on a particular issue/topic. Each group of experts has their own discussion forum to work in as they develop their expertise.

Depending on the topic, and level of desired depth of expertise, this could take one week.

2. Form new groups. Each new group includes an expert from one of the original groups. These new groups have their own discussion forum.
3. Experts lead new group in an online discussion on their area of expertise. Again, depending on the topic and desired depth, each expert could lead a discussion over one day to one week.

Chatroom of Voices (synchronous discussion)

(Modified from Brookfield & Preskill's Circle of Voices protocol)

Steps:

1. Form students into groups of 4-5, and set up a chatroom for each group.
2. Post a question, a passage, etc. that focuses the chat.
3. After students have a few minutes of quiet time to organize their thoughts (or you can ask students to prepare in advance of joining the chat), each student in the group then has 3 minutes of uninterrupted time to respond (this can be done sequentially, or in whatever order, as long as everyone writes for 3 minutes).
Modification: Each student must begin by paraphrasing the comments of the previous student, and must strive to show how his or her postings relate to the comments of the previous student.
4. After everyone in the chatroom has had their 3 minutes, the discussion is opened up with the following ground rule: Students are allowed to contribute to the chat only about other people's ideas, not expand on their own ideas (unless asked a direct question).

Chatroom Full of Quotes (synchronous discussion)

(Modified from Brookfield & Preskill's Hatful of Quotes protocol)

Steps:

1. Set up a chatroom for use with groups of 10-15 students.
2. Prepare 5-6 sentences/passages/quotes from the text. Assign each student a number based on the number of quotes you have (e.g., if you have 6 quotes, assign students a number from 1 to 6).
3. Share the quotes and explain that students assigned #1 will respond to quote #1 and so on.
4. Give students a few minutes to organize their thoughts about the quote.
5. Call on each student (randomly, by alphabetical order or by entry into the chatroom) to share the quote and comment on it.
6. Each student has 1-2 minutes to respond in the chatroom.
7. Once you have called on all students to participate in the chat, you may want to have them write and post a 250-word summary describing the content of the chat session.

Note: What is interesting about this activity is that since there are only 5-6 quotes that

students are reacting to, that they get to read others' views about the quote they posted on (or will post on).

Improving the Odds of Effective Collaborative Work in Online Courses

Joanna C. Dunlap

The following are some guidelines and suggestions I've found helpful when designing collaborative (groupwork and teamwork) activities.

Definitions

Tenets of collaborative/cooperative learning ~

- Positive interdependence
- Individual accountability
- Promotive interaction
- Development of teamwork skills (with guided practice)
- Regular assessment of teamwork functioning

Groupwork ~

- Activity spans short time frame.
- Groups formed spontaneously.
- Groups breakup after a session (little or no commitment).
- Most students equipped with skills to do groupwork.

Teamwork ~

- Activities span long time frame.
- Teams formed carefully.
- Teams stay formed and have commitments.
- Students are ill equipped with skills to do teamwork.

Basic guidelines for online collaborative student work

1. Balance individual and collaborative work, online and off-line work.
2. Make sure collaborative work is relevant, and that learners understand the relevance.
3. Even if you are not involving learners in collaborative projects, assign learners to study/support groups or involve them in other collaborative activities: role-playing, debates, discussion protocols (e.g., jigsaw, rotating stations, the final word), peer review, case studies, game/quiz show, competitions, group test taking, “Naked Came the Manatee” co-construction/writing, and so on.
4. Assign learners to teams with 4-5 members. Form team with goal to spread abilities, skills and learning preferences/styles. [Follow a method, such as mixed ability, or learning preference assessment, or learning goal focus.]
5. Keep learners in same teams during the whole semester.
6. Build time into the course schedule for team formation.
7. Establish explicit individual learner roles and responsibilities (e.g., organizer/project manager, main researcher, section writer, editor, etc.). Roles and responsibilities should lead to a fair division of labor. Rotate roles with each project.

8. Have learners construct a team agreement, including ramifications of non-compliance with the agreement. Wikis (e.g., PBwiki and Wikispaces) and collaborative document creation tools like Google Docs are useful tools to make available to learners as the work on collaborative documents, such as the team agreement. Plus, it will give learners an opportunity to practice using a tool or tools they will find helpful as they continue their collaborative work together.
9. Consider easier team projects early on, building towards more complexity.
10. Break a collaborative project up into a subset of deliverables (smaller, more manageable team projects), with due dates spread out across the timeframe.
11. Establish a mechanism for checking in on teams and individual team members, such as:
 - Engage in structured walkthroughs at various points during the project. Use synchronous tools (e.g., Adobe Connect) to meet with a team and ask pointed questions of each team member regarding contributions to the project.
 - Require weekly status reports from each team/team member (e.g., summarize what the team accomplished this week, describe your most significant contribution to the project this week, describe why the contribution was significant, describe with other team members contributed, and describe what you need to accomplish on the project next week). Blogging tools such as Blogger, WordPress, and LiveJournal are great ways for team members to share their weekly status reports.
12. With each project, include a team-graded component and an individual-graded component.
13. Assess process, product, and outcome.
14. Consider “no jeopardy” approaches to collaborative work that allow for a submitted product to be complete without a missing member’s contribution. Examples include:
 - Each student completes an allocated task that contributes to the final team product and gets the marks for that task;
 - Each student writes and submits an individual report based on the team’s work on the task/project;
 - Each student takes an exam, with exam questions that specifically target the team project, and can only be answered by students who have been thoroughly involved in the project;
 - Each student’s contribution is assessed via individually-produced evidence such as status reports, journals, time logs, and direct observation;
 - Each student produces an individual paper based on the team project.
15. Allow for the use of a variety of collaboration tools, such as the ones mentioned above as well as those included in the learning management system (e.g., Blackboard, eCollege). Also, use tools and technologies commonly used in the profession for which you are preparing students.

Assessing online collaborative work: A few suggestions

1. Teamwork rubric. Create a rubric for assessing collaborative contribution (see Table 1), with clear criteria. Make that rubric available to learners well in advance of a collaborative project.
2. “Rules of Engagement” contract. This contract should include information on:

- Who will post: Which team member will be responsible for posting the group's deliverables?
 - Leader or not: Some groups chose a leader to keep things moving, some groups change that leader each week (or every other week or whatever), and some groups decide not to do this.
 - Communication and deadlines: How will they communicate with each other? How often? Will they set interim deadlines? Some groups like to set certain deadlines, such as initial work done by Wednesday, rewrites by Friday, and final posted Sunday.
 - Equal contributions: How will work be distributed?
 - Preferred work style: Some people like to get things done during the week and take the weekend off and others prefer the opposite. What is your style? How will you handle style differences?
 - Not getting work done: What will the group do if one member cannot fulfill his or her obligations? Will that member be docked points, or can the member make up the work?
 - Known problems: Issues you know will come up, how to handle dates you know you will be out of town?
3. Team Review Form: Figure 1 is a form learners use to assess each other's contributions to team projects (as well as their own contributions). These assessments can have ramifications, such as if a team member receives less than 50 points on the Team Review Form from more than one team member then that learner's points for the deliverable will be reduced by 20%. This form can be completed at the end of projects, or at key points throughout a project.
 4. Weekly status reports. Have learners submit weekly (or biweekly) status reports (see #11 under basic guidelines above).
 5. Public and semi-public structured walkthroughs. Similar to #11 above, but with a different objective, meet with teams/groups during a project using the chatroom feature provided in the learning management system, or other meeting tool like Adobe Connect or Skype. In advance, provide the group with a set of questions you will ask about the project. When together, randomly select group members to respond to particular questions.
 6. Project quiz/exam. Once the project is complete, test team members on the content of the project. You can easily build quizzes using the test construction tool built into the learning management system, or by using Google Spreadsheets (specifically, the Forms feature).

Table 1. Rubric for assessing collaborative contribution

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Contributions	Routinely provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. A leader who contributes a lot of effort.	Usually provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. A strong group member who tries hard!	Sometimes provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. A satisfactory group member who does what is required.	Rarely provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. May refuse to participate.
Problem-Solving	Actively looks for and suggests solutions to problems.	Refines solutions suggested by others.	Does not suggest or refine solutions, but is willing to try out solutions suggested by others.	Does not try to solve problems or help others solve problems. Lets others do the work.
Attitude	Is never publicly critical of the project or the work of others. Always has a positive attitude about the task(s).	Is rarely publicly critical of the project or the work of others. Often has a positive attitude about the task(s).	Is occasionally publicly critical of the project or the work of other members of the group.	Is often publicly critical of the project or the work of other members of the group. Is often negative about the task(s).
Focus on the Task	Consistently stays focused on the task and what needs to be done. Very self-directed.	Focuses on the task and what needs to be done most of the time. Other group members can count on this person.	Focuses on the task and what needs to be done some of the time. Other group members must sometimes nag, prod, and remind to keep this person on-task..	Rarely focuses on the task and what needs to be done. Lets others do the work.
Working with Others	Almost always listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Tries to keep people working well together.	Usually listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Does not cause "waves" in the group.	Often listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others, but sometimes is not a good team member.	Rarely listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Often is not a good team player.

Figure 1. Team Review Form

For an online team to be successful, it requires that each member of the team works toward the achievement of the group's goals and helps support the group working processes. Each member must also participate actively in online discussions and interactions in ways that are sensitive to the needs and feelings of other members of the group.

Use the following rubric to evaluate your colleagues' contributions and effectiveness as online team members. Then, use this same rubric to evaluate yourself as a team member. When evaluating yourself, please use the Comments field to describe in detail your contribution to the group's work.

As an aside: A group member may have an emergency that keeps him/her from being able to participate on an activity. If the group agrees that this person will miss helping on one assignment but will make up for it on another assignment after returning from the emergency, then you can let me know that you will not be submitting a form for that individual on the missing assignment (please refer to your "Rules of Engagement" team contract to verify how your group has decided to handle such events). In the past, these sorts of arrangements have been made, and the form doesn't accommodate deal making (but I will).

For each item, select the score you believe best reflects that person's efforts and contributions.

If the person:

- Always demonstrates the quality, you would give a score of 5.
- Frequently demonstrates the quality, you would give a score of 4.
- Sometimes demonstrates the quality, you would give a score of 3.
- Seldom demonstrates the quality, you would give a score of 2.
- Never demonstrates the quality, you would give a score of 1.

Your Name:	<input type="text"/>				
Team Member Reviewed:	<input type="text"/>				
1. Is willing to frequently share ideas and resources.	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
2. Accepts responsibilities for tasks determined by the group.	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
3. Respects differences of opinions and backgrounds.	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
4. Is willing to negotiate and make compromises.	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
5. Provides leadership and support by taking an active role in initiating ideas and actions.	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
6. Respects decisions of others.	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
7. Provides positive feedback of team members' accomplishments.	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
8. Is willing to work with others for the purpose of group success.	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
9. Online communication is friendly in tone.	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
10. Keeps in close contact with team members for the purpose of maintaining team cohesion and collaboration.	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
11. Produces high quality work.	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
12. Meets team deadlines.	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
13. Comments (Please provide your teammate with positive and constructive feedback.):	<input type="text"/>				

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