



Instructional Technology Newsletter

Developing 21st Century Skills One Byte at a Time

Differentiating Instruction With MOODLE?

One of my favorite quotes that I have a tendency to refer to a lot in education is "fair is not giving everyone the same, it is giving everyone what they need". There have been variations of this message. What has not changed is the meaning. In order to fulfill our responsibilities as educators we must ensure that all of our students learn. It is our responsibility to facilitate learning in our classrooms.

Each of our students are unique. What are we doing to make connections, provide targeted instruction and supports that support each child? Are we giving everyone the same instruction? Is everyone assessed the same, all of the time? Do we provide opportunities for students to self-direct their learning, move at pace that works for them, and apply and present their knowledge in ways that offer authentic connections?

This is no easy task. Fortunately, there are some technology tools that can assist in the implementation of the differentiated classroom. One of these tools is Moodle. Moodle is a web-based course management system. It allows teachers to extend their classroom beyond the four walls and the time constraints of a period. Over the past year we have uncovered a number of additional uses for Moodle. We currently offer on-demand professional development courses, collaborative group meetings, a faculty book club and curriculum re-

sources.

As a classroom tool Moodle can be used to differentiate. When a teacher sets up an online classroom in Moodle, he or she has access to a number of resources and activities that they can share with their students.

Courses can be setup by topic or weeks. Each topic may include resources such as: links to videos and tutorials, primary source documents, articles, websites, and interactive sites.. PowerPoint presentations, Word documents, Excel spreadsheets, PDF's and images can all be saved in a topic.

If we provide a variety of resources and content for each of our instructional units we can meet the first framework of the Universal Design for Learning. By providing multiple forms of representation we allow students of mixed abilities, personalities and learning style to interact with content that fits. When this content is available online our students can pause, stop and rewind. They can also consume the information at a time that is right for them. It individualizes the learning experience for the student.

The flipped classroom model can be facilitated on Moodle. Moodle can be the portal that houses the content. The homework assigned in a flipped classroom involves students reviewing the content. The classwork is to apply what was learned. Continued p. 3

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Differentiating instruction with Moodle

Can webcams increase reading fluency?

A grade 2 class makes global connections.

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Using Webcams to Improve Reading Fluency

Webcams have been a part of many classrooms for a number of years. The most common use is for video conferencing. Webcams open up the classroom to the world by allowing classes to communicate and collaborate with authors, subject area experts and other classrooms around the world. [I have a wiki page with more information on this topic that can be found here.](#)



Webcams have other uses in the classroom that have a direct impact on student achievement in all subject areas. They can be used to create digital stories, tutorials, interviews and a variety of other student-centered projects. In this posting I would like to discuss how they can be used to increase reading fluency.

The combination of a webcam, microphone (Many webcams include a microphone) and a free program such as Windows Movie Maker allow students to record themselves. These recordings can be stored,

played back and even published. [Timothy J Frey, Abby Houlton, and Elizabeth Gruis recently published a study on using webcams to increase reading fluency.](#) In their article they speak about a process called "I can see me". The process looks something like this:

- Teacher selects an appropriate text and makes two copies for the student.
- Students record themselves reading the story using a webcam and windows movie maker (or any other video capture program.
- Students play back the recording of their reading and make note of errors that they made. They assess their rate, volume and accuracy.
- The student and teacher then conference to discuss their reading.
- The student then re-reads and records the video. He or she will re-watch the video and observe any improvement or mistakes.

It is in the last stage of the pro-

cess, when students are rereading and playing back, that they see their improvement. They can see themselves improving. This provides encouragement and a feeling of success. It is the observable, incremental successes that result in better fluency. "We were really interested in interventions that students can do themselves or that build metacognitive skills," Frey said. "Having the students build skills and learn to detect their own errors rather than teachers trying to fix them over and over again is really important for students."(Frey)

If the storage space is available the student may save their recordings. This portfolio will be available to show how the student has progressed over time. It can also be shared at the end of the school year with the child's next teacher to serve as a benchmark.

If you are interested in trying this with your students please let me know. I will be happy to assist. There are a number of strategies, rubrics and classroom management scenarios that we can discuss.

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The Connected Classroom

The student's in Mrs. Fastnacht's grade 2 class in Cozy Lake School have been sharing their learning and expanding their classrooms by connecting with classrooms around the country.

The students have been using [Skype](#) to connect with classrooms in Virginia, North Carolina, as well as classes in our own district.

By making a connection to our social studies curriculum, students are learning about the differences and similarities of each community. They are also able to answer questions about their community, cultures and schools.

All of the details, images and videos of the interactions are published on a [class wiki](#). This wiki also

contains Venn diagrams developed by the students in Virginia to show the similarities and differences of each class and state.

Mrs. Fastnacht and her students have integrated their readers theater curriculum by connecting with classes in Milton School and our Middle School to perform their skits for a live audience.

Differentiating With Moodle Continued...

Moodle also offers a number of authoring and reflection activities. There are a variety of discussion forums that may be implemented. Teachers may organize classes or students into groups in order to manage and target varying needs. Discussion forums can be whole group discussions, private postings between teacher and student or forums that allow students to view other student responses only after they respond first.

Discussion forums offer opportunities for reflection. Students may maintain private blogs in place of journals. They can reflect upon their learning, projects and reading. For example, an art student can publish an image of their work and write a reflective piece about it. The discussion fo-

Moodle is a tool that when utilized to its potential can provide an individualized learning experience for students. It offers teacher a forum to facilitate self-directed learning.

forums offer students an opportunity to interact with peers in a medium that is comfortable to them. They are provided time to formulate their thoughts and opinions. Access from home provides time to reflect and publish ideas to share with their class. It allows everyone an equal opportunity to contribute.

Moodle has features that allow faculty to rate/grade postings according to the rubric of their choice. This offers a level of accountability to the process.

Another feature of Moodle that may be useful is the ability to create quizzes, tests and surveys. The security features of these assess-

ments are very granular. I have yet to find a scenario that could not be met with Moodle. Teachers may use these assessments to pre-test or differentiate assessments for particular students. The results of each assessment are automatically scored and reported.

Moodle is a fabulous tool that is supportive of the differentiated classroom. It is of course just a tool that provides access and individualized learning opportunities. The fundamental principals of differentiation can not be taught by learning Moodle. I recommend our online Moodle course on the topic or our faculty book club. Each are currently covering this topic.

What is cool on the web?

Authors who do 20 Minute Skype sessions for free.

[http://
kmessner.livejournal.com/106020.html](http://kmessner.livejournal.com/106020.html)

Skype with an Author Network

<http://skypeanauthor.wetpaint.com/>

Our Google Sites Domain

<http://sites.google.com/a/jefftwp.org>

Google sites is a free website creation tool. All of our faculty members have accounts and can create an unlimited amount of sites. These sites can be developed for webquests, project resources or collaborative projects.