

Facilitating Active Learning and Classroom Assessment Techniques through D2L

All sections of ENG 101 at MSU are held, at least part time, in computer labs that allow each student access to his or her own computer. Since we are fortunate enough to have this kind of technological access, many sections of composition are facilitated through the D2L framework that all MSU faculty and students have access to. Because of its online format, D2L offers instructors a variety of teaching strategies that expand upon the regular opportunities available in face-to-face interactions. Instructors can supplement their classroom environment online.

As discussed during our CETL meetings, active learning is a teaching approach through which instructors allow students to participate in class, rather than adhering to a strict lecture format in which students do not actively participate. Classroom assessment techniques are used by instructors to assess students' comprehension of covered material, often with an emphasis on assessing progress long before formal assessment, in order to curtail gaps in communication between instructor and student, or problem areas in comprehension. D2L provides ways to effectively do both of these, leading to increased retention and comprehension.

We find that D2L can enhance classroom learning through use of its Discussion and Chat Room functions, which enable active learning, and enable classroom assessment through use of its Quiz function. The following examples display specific cases from classroom experience and describe possible benefits.

Lesson Plan #1: D2L Discussion

D2L discussion boards are an excellent way to facilitate discussion among students and promote active learning. This provides several benefits:

- Participation in discussion promotes active learning during classroom time
- Active learning can be continued outside of the classroom during homework time
- Students who might not enjoy speaking up in the classroom setting often feel more anonymous, and therefore more comfortable discussion via internet
- Students who are not as successful speakers, and therefore more reticent in class, may excel in the online environment
- D2L saves a record of the discussion for the instructor to gauge comprehension and participation

Example #1:

Students in Composition 101 were preparing to write research papers, and they were attempting to narrow down their topics from very broad concepts that they could not successfully deal with in the assigned six pages to more specific, refined, and manageable topics. I assigned a discussion board post before class in which the students discussed what they intended to write about. During class time, students had to read all posts and respond to at least three by adding information that they knew about the topic, things they had recently heard or read in the news, personal experiences they had been through, or ways to narrow the topic down to be more specific. We had a reference librarian in the classroom that day (a particularly convenient luxury), so she logged in and contributed to their topic-narrowing process, as did I.

Discussions can be threaded to allow students to track which posts apply to their own post, which allows to easy organization. D2L can be accessed through the MNSU website from any remote computer.

course Home | Content | Discussions | Chat | Dropbox | Quizzes | Survey | Grades | Classlist | Glossary

View: Threaded

<input type="checkbox"/>	Subject	Authored By	Date
<input type="checkbox"/>	paper topic	Maggie Pichotta	Mar 26, 2006 4:00 PM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thesis Statement	Brandon Daly	Mar 20, 2006 11:40 AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thesis statement from kelly and kelly	Kelly Sadler	Mar 20, 2006 11:22 AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	research topic	Brandon Daly	Mar 20, 2006 11:11 AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Re: research topic	Nathaniel Pitts	Mar 20, 2006 11:14 AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Re: research topic	Catherine Hooper	Mar 20, 2006 11:17 AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	research topic	Ryan Fick	Mar 20, 2006 10:52 AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Re: research topic	Nathaniel Pitts	Mar 20, 2006 10:55 AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Re: research topic	Jessi Hornick	Mar 20, 2006 10:58 AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Re: research topic	Leslie Peterson	Mar 20, 2006 10:56 AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Re: research topic	Brady Prince	Mar 20, 2006 10:57 AM

Can a person be given a ticket if the camera catches them speeding? I know a lot of stop lights have cameras on them and that if you run a red light you will get a ticket in the mail. Or are these pictures just sent out saying, "Hey! you were speed

<<< Replied to message below >>>
 Authored by: Nathaniel Pitts
 Authored on: Mar 20, 2006 10:55:21 AM
 Subject: Re: research topic

Discuss the benefits and consequences along with the facts.

<<< Replied to message below >>>
 Authored by: Ryan Fick
 Authored on: Mar 20, 2006 10:52:59 AM
 Subject: research topic

I want to talk about the new cameras installed in my hometown that track speeders and send a picture with their speed in

Screen shot of Example #1 Discussion, consisting of 136 posts.

Results:

Students seemed to feel much more comfortable giving each other feedback through the discussion board rather than face to face, and gave more feedback than I felt that they did when I have attempted the same sort of activity in face-to-face groups. They seemed much more free to suggest possible alternatives to their peers' ideas. The resulting papers were more creative and more focused than the ones I had encountered during the previous semester.

All students participated (which never happens in class discussion), and several students who contribute very little to verbal discussion included fairly lengthy written discussion. I don't think that these students would have added as much to in-class discussion, and it would have taken too long to get all students to discuss out loud.

This can also be used for a classroom assessment technique. Students can spend time posting discussions that allow students to gauge their comprehension.

Lesson Plan #2: D2L Chat Room

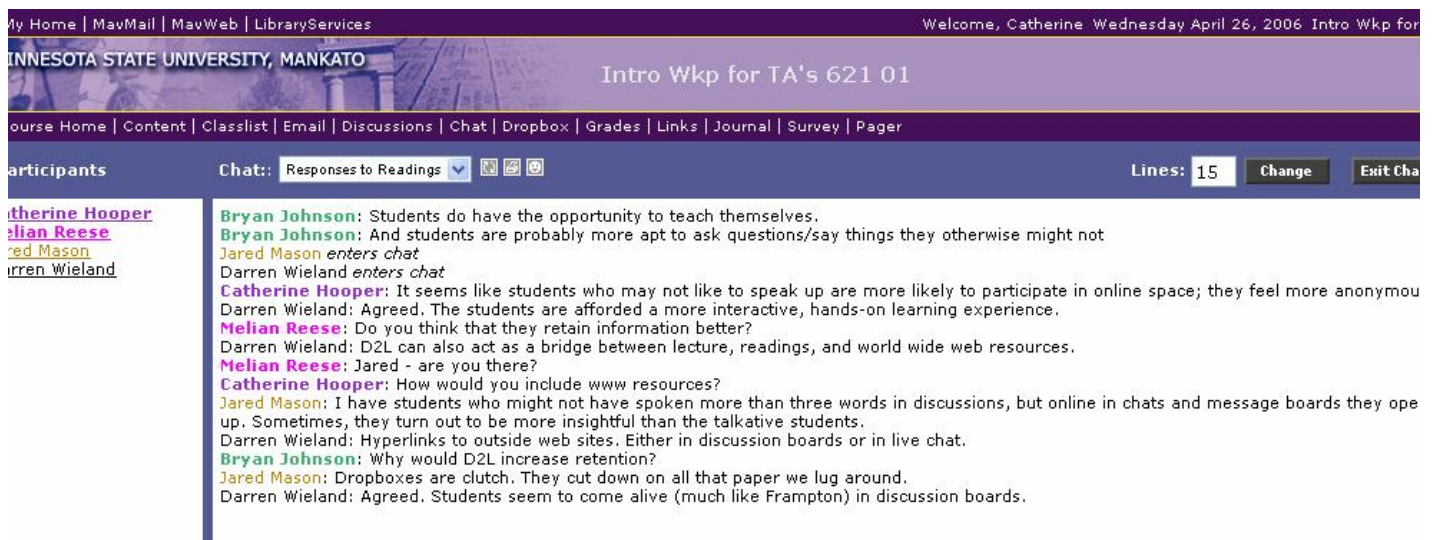
Chat rooms are another D2L function that allow students to interact actively within the class framework. Benefits include:

- Real-time interaction between students
- Can be broken up into smaller group chats for certain groups of students or a main chat for the entire class
- As with discussion, often draws out students who otherwise participate very little in in-class interaction
- Students often view as informal, which allows them to comfortably and casually exchange ideas and information

Example #1:

Students were assigned to read an example of a profile essay, a type of writing most were unfamiliar with and that was their next assignment for the course. At the beginning of class, students were given a handout with discussion questions and predetermined chat groups of four students each were set up on D2L. The students entered the chat room and discussed their responses to the questions to come up with a group consensus. Students discussed, and worked their way through ideas such as symbolism, concrete detail, voice, and word choice. Students had to provide examples from the text to back up their responses. They were assigned to print a transcript of the chat to turn in at the end.

This allowed groups to interface in a virtual format during class. They could discuss ideas informally and rapidly. The instructor can observe, participate in, or print out transcripts of the chat session to assess participation and comprehension.



The screenshot shows a D2L chat room interface. At the top, there are navigation links: "My Home | My Mail | My Web | Library Services" and a welcome message: "Welcome, Catherine Wednesday April 26, 2006 Intro Wkp for". Below this is a header for "MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO" and "Intro Wkp for TA's 621 01". A secondary navigation bar includes: "Course Home | Content | Classlist | Email | Discussions | Chat | Dropbox | Grades | Links | Journal | Survey | Pager". The chat area has a title "Chat: Responses to Readings" and a "Lines: 15" indicator with "Change" and "Exit Chat" buttons. On the left, a list of participants includes: "Catherine Hooper", "Melian Reese", "Jared Mason", and "Darren Wieland". The chat transcript on the right shows the following messages:

- Bryan Johnson:** Students do have the opportunity to teach themselves.
- Bryan Johnson:** And students are probably more apt to ask questions/say things they otherwise might not
- Jared Mason enters chat**
- Darren Wieland enters chat**
- Catherine Hooper:** It seems like students who may not like to speak up are more likely to participate in online space; they feel more anonymous
- Darren Wieland:** Agreed. The students are afforded a more interactive, hands-on learning experience.
- Melian Reese:** Do you think that they retain information better?
- Darren Wieland:** D2L can also act as a bridge between lecture, readings, and world wide web resources.
- Melian Reese:** Jared - are you there?
- Catherine Hooper:** How would you include www resources?
- Jared Mason:** I have students who might not have spoken more than three words in discussions, but online in chats and message boards they open up. Sometimes, they turn out to be more insightful than the talkative students.
- Darren Wieland:** Hyperlinks to outside web sites. Either in discussion boards or in live chat.
- Bryan Johnson:** Why would D2L increase retention?
- Jared Mason:** Dropboxes are clutch. They cut down on all that paper we lug around.
- Darren Wieland:** Agreed. Students seem to come alive (much like Frampton) in discussion boards.

Screen shot of an example chat room (is not the example from Example #1).

Results:

Students actively participated in the discussion of the reading. They provided a multitude of details, and they knew they had to turn in a printed transcript of the discussion, which probably kept them accountable for their participation.

Students who rarely participate in verbal class discussion actually added some very insightful thoughts on the reading, and other students responded favorably.

One drawback was that students who struggle with typing proficiency could contribute less quickly than others, but this did provide a nice way for different students to lead discussions than the ones who regularly do so.

Assessment Technique #1: D2L Quizzing

Function:

Features of the Quiz:

After an assigned reading or going over a grade sheet the quiz function on D2L is a great way to assess the students' retention and, of course, whether or not they did the reading. The quiz function allows several different options for a tailor-made quiz.

- The quiz can be created ahead of time and set to begin and end at specified times.
- A time limit can be set for the quiz.
- There is a large variety of types of questions that can be utilized: true/false, multiple choice, long and short answer, ordering, and fill in the blanks.
- The quiz can be set up to auto-grade or grade manually.
- During grading you have the opportunity to add feedback to any answers that the student will be able to review with their grade.

Using the Quiz:

There are a couple of ways in which the actual quiz can be used:

- As is always the case – a quiz can often strike fear into the hearts of students. The quiz can be used a motivational tool for the students to complete the readings.
- The quiz can be gone over after the students have all taken it and the answers reviewed as a way to open up discussion about the reading material and/or lead into an assignment or grade sheet.
- The quiz can also be utilized as purely an assessment technique where it is simply graded and the students can review the answers when they get their quiz grade back.

Sample of the grading screen.

Batzlaff, Brendan (ID: 00800662)

Available: Starts Feb 15, 2006 at 1:45 PM

Written: Feb 15, 2006 from 2:00 PM to 2:08 PM

[Quizzing Event Log](#)

Timing

Time Limit: 15 minutes (enforced)

Grace Period: 1 minute before being marked as late

Time Spent: 8 minutes

Grading Feedback

Final Score: / 10

[Re - Calculate](#)

[Auto - Gr](#)

Graded (G): ?

Attempt Comments: in HTML



Quiz Results

Question 1

Evaluation involves 3 things: judgement criteria ✓ and evidence.

Save Time: 2:08 PM

Score: / 2 (autograded)

Feedback: [Add Feedback](#)

Question 2

How does criteria function in a review. What does it do? What is it?

Answer: Criteria are a certian list of things a certian object or written peice has include composition. Such as setting and charaters and most important the over all theme or r the work. Criteria is the base to the review, it establishes the guidlines to follow in ord correct evaluation.

Save Time: 2:08 PM

Score: / 2 (not autograded: a default value of 0 was assigned)

Feedback: [Add Feedback](#)

composition. Such as setting and characters and most important the overall theme or the work. Criteria is the base to the review, it establishes the guidelines to follow in order correct evaluation.

Save Time: 2:08 PM

Score: / 2 (not autograded: a default value of 0 was assigned)

Feedback:  **Add Feedback**

Question 3

Give an example of criteria for automobiles.

Answer: Criteria for an automobile in the present state in time, must be environment friendly be put through testing to qualify that it is a safe auto. It must be gas friendly and easy to operate.

Save Time: 2:08 PM

Score: / 2 (not autograded: a default value of 0 was assigned)

Feedback:  **Add Feedback**

Question 4

The criteria/evaluation portion of a review paper should be about 40%.

- True
- False


Save Time: 2:08 PM

Score: / 1 (autograded)

Feedback:  **Add Feedback**


Preview of the quiz I created:

Question 1

(2 points)  Save


Evaluation involves 3 things: judgement and evidence.

Question 2

(2 points)  Save


How does criteria function in a review. What does it do? What is it?

Question 3

(2 points)  Save

Give an example of criteria for automobiles.


Question 4

(1 point)  Save

The criteria/evaluation portion of a review paper should be about 40%.

- True
 False

Question 5

(2 points)  Save

How long does the final completed review paper need to be?