Blackboard Pedagogical Tips

Anyone can place content into their Blackboard course, but every faculty member should ask themselves this important question: “Does the content I place into my course enhance teaching and learning?”

Questions to Ask Ourselves:
1. How do people learn?
2. How can I use technology when implementing the Seven Principles?
3. What should be learned?
4. How should online courses be designed?
5. How will we know if learning occurs?

How Do People Learn? - Learning Theories

There are many different learning theories that explain how people learn.

- Constructivism
- Behaviorism
- Piaget’s Developmental Theory
- Neuroscience
- Brain-Based Learning
- Learning Styles
- Multiple Intelligences
- Right Brain/Left Brain Thinking
- Communities of Practice
- Control Theory
- Observational Learning
- Vygotsky and Social Cognition

More information is located at Funderstanding’s About Learning/Theories.

Implementing the Seven Principles: Technology as a Lever

View this short presentation by Tonia Malone, Technology Can Enhance Teaching & Learning.

1. Good Practice Encourages Contacts Between Students and Faculty
   Frequent student-faculty contact in and out of class is a most important factor in student motivation and involvement. Faculty concern helps students get through rough times and keep on working. Knowing a few faculty members well enhances students’ intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and plans.

   Discussion Tool: Provide a threaded discussion, which allows students and instructors the ability to share concepts, ideas, questions and answers. One way to use this tool is for Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). Create a Forum that allows students to see FAQ questions/answers. They may be able to help each other and you can post all questions/answers there instead of emailing to individuals. Discussion Forums can also extend class time discussion by providing tools outside of class. You may find using a Forum for exam-related questions very helpful as well.

2. Good Practice Develops Reciprocity and Cooperation Among Students
   Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing one’s ideas and responding to others improves thinking and deepens understanding.

   Group Tools: Provide a collaborative area for student groups to discuss
with a threaded discussion board, chat (synchronously) with group members, exchange files for review or additions, and/or send email to each other. Students today have many responsibilities and finding a time and place to meet can be very difficult. These Group tools allow all users to meet on their own timelines.

Virtual Classroom Tool: Students and instructors may communicate on a topic in the synchronous chat room. Real-time communication with Whiteboard tools to allow for collaboration and off-site office hours.

3. Good Practice Uses Active Learning Techniques
Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing prepackaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write reflectively about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves.

Interactivity: Interactive applications such as this Timber Structural animation allows students to view information in multiple views with movement, graphics, and text. This provides multiple information for many different learner styles.
4. Good Practice Gives Prompt Feedback
Knowing what you know and don’t know focuses your learning. In getting started, students need help in assessing their existing knowledge and competence. Then, in classes, students need frequent opportunities to perform and receive feedback on their performance. At various points during college, and at its end, students need chances to reflect on what they have learned, what they still need to know, and how they might assess themselves.

Digital DropBox & Gradebook: With the collaboration of the Digital DropBox and the Gradebook, students can submit assignments, that instructors can return with comments and changes (Word Track Changes feature). Once the final assignment is submitted, instructors can add the grade to the Gradebook. This way, the students are informed of their progress in the course and have ample time to adjust, if needed.

5. Good Practice Emphasizes Time on Task
Time plus energy equals learning. Learning to use one’s time well is critical for students and professionals alike. Allocating realistic amounts of time means effective learning for students and effective teaching for faculty.

Online Content: Providing content online allows students to review (syllabus, lectures, links, etc.) materials on their schedule. Access to PowerPoint presentations, old exam questions, homework answers, etc., provides students with study tools that can improve their grades.

Assessment Tool: Students are able to test their knowledge on practice exams to verify their understanding before taking the exam in class.
6. Good Practice Communicates High Expectations

Expect more and you will get it. High expectations are important for everyone — for the poorly prepared, for those unwilling to exert themselves, and for the brightest and most talented.

Assignments: Give clear and exact information for the assignment. You can also provide students with clear examples on excellent, average and poor performance.

Discussion Tool: Have students post their papers for peer evaluation during the developmental time. Then again after the final paper is turned in so that their peers can see how the paper progressed. Students are encouraged to create professional documents when they are published for others to view.

Simulations: By simulating real life problems/issues students are able to repeat steps without extra expense or danger to others. These simulations can be performed at home or anywhere there is internet access.

7. Good Practice Respects Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning

Many roads lead to learning. Different students bring different talents and styles to college. Brilliant students in a seminar might be all thumbs in a lab or studio; students rich in hands-on experience may not do so well with theory. Students need opportunities to show their talents and learn in ways that work for them. Then they can be pushed to learn in new ways that do not come so easily.

Multiple Learning Styles: Providing multiple content formats (text, images, sound, audio, animations, graphs, etc.) allow for students to find learning based on their preferred learning style. Many instructors tend to teach in the learning style they are accustomed to.
Repetition: Provide information about the course, assignments and exams in multiple locations of the course. In the Syllabus there is a list of Course Goals/Objectives. Repeat these goals/objectives with the assignment or content so that the student is directed in their learning path.

Audio/Video: As with this Italian course, students benefit greatly by watching an Italian movie clip. Seeing and lessonsing to native Italian speaking people is at their fingertips anytime anywhere.

Games: Who said education can't be fun? Play Jeopardy, Who Wants to be a Millionaire or provide crossword puzzles for students to use online or in class.
Now that we know how people learn, let's look at ways to create course content that uses some of these learning theories.

Getting Started

- What Should Be Learned?
  That is for you to determine. It is important to give your students direction and goals. Blackboard's Course Information section is the location for placing your course syllabus, goals and objectives, outline, and course schedule.

- How Should Online Courses Be Designed?
  Instructional design is very important when developing online education. The role of the instructor and the design of the online course plays an important role in learning. "Materials themselves do not teach but provide a medium that with appropriate use can support learning." (Oliver, Herrington, and Omari, 1996). To read more about instructional design, go to the Instructional Design Tips provided by Blackboard.

- How Can We Facilitate Learning, and How Will We Know if Learning Occurs?
  An online course used to supplement a lecture has different parameters than a true distance learning course. Since an online supplemental course allows the instructor to conduct testing in the classroom, the instructor does not have to rely on Blackboard tools to assess his/her students. Here are some tips on how to use Blackboard to enhance teaching and learning:

Syllabus: It is very important to have your syllabus list every aspect of your course (topics for discussion, expectations for participation, student assessment, and a detailed outline of the material).

Syllabus

Description / Course Goals / Grading Policies / Required Materials / Course Calendar

Description:

This course is designed for those teachers enrolled in the Crosscultural Language and Academic Development Program. It is an in-depth study of the methodology and strategies for appropriate instruction of English Language Learning students in California today. Topics examined in this class will include the historical and contemporary status of language minority groups in California, an introduction to the sound and structure of the English language, and exploration of the current research available on second language acquisition methods.

Course Goals:

1. Knowledge of first and second language acquisition theories and teaching strategies, including knowledge of the elements of linguistics applied to second language learning and content teaching for E.L.L. students:
   a. Identification of language proficiency terms based on research of Dr. James Cummins: Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)
   b. Contextual support for cognitively challenging instruction
   c. Models of cooperative learning techniques which encourage language development through authentic communication
   d. Common Underlying Proficiency (CLUP) and Separate Underlying Proficiency (SUP)
   e. Analysis of why high levels of CALP in primary language lead to more success in acquiring a second language and more academic success in second language

Content Separation: Create a calendar of course readings and assignments for the entire course, then separate your content into weeks or by learning topics. For example, if your course is five weeks in duration, then create a folder for each week. In each folder add the content for the week; this will help guide your students through the course.
Course Calendar:
Here is the course calendar that lists the course items for the week. On the calendar you will notice the two days (Tuesday & Friday) in which you are required to complete tasks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week One</td>
<td>Introduction and Overview, Syllabus, Course Outline, (Diagnostic Project)</td>
<td>Readings: Lecture One Outline, Goals of ELL Instruction, Read Biographies and comment, Assignment: Discussion Questions on lecture, Choose an ELL student for your Ethnographic Study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Week One

Week Two

Week Three

Week Four

Week Five

Redundancy: When it comes to learning objectives, redundancy is a good thing! The syllabus is not the only place to list the learning objectives for the course; you can also place them within the content area. It is OK to be redundant with learning objectives in your course materials. At the beginning of each content area list the goals and assignments that pertain to the material.

Assignment One

Goals:
To introduce yourself to the others so that they can get to know who you are and why you are in the course. The Home Page will allow you to add personal information about yourself (picture, facts that will allow your classmates to form a community with you and each other).

Due:
Friday, Week One. 20 pts.

Instructions:
Write a short introduction of yourself. Introduce yourself to the class, tell why you are in the course, and what you hope to learn. Include personal and professional goals. You may use the following student tools area and click on Home Page, where you may create your own page. Include a photo. If you like. After you post your biography, feel free to comment on those of your classmates.

Promote Communities: Since distance education implies that the students are not in the same location when learning, it is important to give them a sense of community. Create a discussion topic for the students to introduce themselves to the class. Require them to fill out their Home Page form in Blackboard. Require your students to discuss the course material each week. Just like the learning objectives, provide questions to facilitate communication in the discussion area. The student can be required to answer each question and to respond to three other student’s responses.
Place Self-Tests After Each Main Topic: This method can improve your students understanding and can also provide information that will help you determine if your students are learning before they attempt the examinations.

Give Your Students an Assignment: Within Blackboard you can allow students to download files that you have posted, work within groups to complete a task, and then upload the file to Blackboard for your review. Students are able to work in groups within Blackboard and use group discussion boards, chat rooms, white boards, email, and the Digital Drop Box. You can also choose to view the course statistics, which allows you to see what material student(s) have viewed.

You may view this demo in the Blackboard course "Effective Teaching with Technology - Campus" as a guest.

1. Go to the Blackboard site and click on the Guest Login Only button.
2. On the login page that appears, click on the Preview button in the section where it says, "You can access as a guest by clicking the "Preview" button below."
3. Once you have entered Blackboard as a guest, then click on the Courses tab.
4. From within the Courses tab, perform a Course Search for EffectiveTeachingwTechnology-Campus, and then click on the Name link to view the course.

More Information

Q: What other materials are available for development support?
A: Evaluating What Really Matters in Computer-Based Education, Educational Benefits of Online Learning, Eight Ways to Get Students More Engaged in Online Conferences, and Instructional Design Tips