

Moodle Sounds Great, But Really, How Will It Enhance What I'm Already Doing?

ICE Conference 2009

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This breakout session is intended to give you ideas on how to use Moodle to supplement, enhance, or implement activities that you are already doing in your classroom, or possibly to give you ideas for new ones. It is NOT intended as a step-by-step tutorial on how to accomplish each of these tasks, nor is it intended to suggest that you would want to put your entire curriculum online.

Since I have more to say about this topic than I could even begin to do in 45 minutes (and since I'm not really big on using paper), I've placed my materials in a Moodle course that you may explore today or at your convenience.

Moodle Course URL: <http://d128.org/moodleclassroom>

You may view the course as a Guest (no ability to participate), or you may login using the demo account I've set up for ICE users:

Username: **ICE2009**

Password: **isabelli**

What IS Moodle?

Moodle is a Course Management System (CMS). It is a free web application that educators can use to create effective online learning sites to supplement their classroom activities. Moodle is a free "Open Source" resource, but you must install it on your own server or find a Moodle hosting service (which could have a cost associated with it).

Privacy:

Moodle is designed to be more of a private classroom page than a public web page. Only enrolled students will normally see your course. Parents or others could be allowed "guest" access to your course. Guest access can be enabled to allow anyone in, or can be set up to force the guest to supply an enrollment "key" before allowing them in. Guests can see most of the content of the course, but cannot interact with others or participate in activities. You can also connect other teachers to your course, and multiple teachers could certainly collaborate on a course.

Moodle is NOT a private experience for the students themselves. The teacher can see everything they have done. This is useful both in ensuring that students remain appropriate at all times and also in assessing each student's level of participation. For example, you can actually see whether or not they have accessed a resource, and when. It is also easy to see who has contributed the most (and least) to a group project that was done through Moodle.

Choices:

The teacher poses a question and supplies a list of possible responses. Students choose a single response. Teacher can choose to configure the choice so that students can immediately see the results, if desired.

Choices could be used to prompt students to make a prediction regarding the outcome of a science lab, or the ending of a story, to gather data, or to express opinions. **Choices** could even be used to have your students "sign" an agreement.

Calendar:

You can add events that are important to your class to the Moodle calendar. This could include assignment due dates, test/quiz dates, field trips, special events, school holidays, and more. Use of the calendar can increase student accountability and facilitate home/school communications if you are giving parents guest access to your class. Teachers with classroom projection systems sometimes train students in counting on the calendar by displaying at the beginning/end of each class.

Resources:

You can use the various Moodle “resources” to create a link to an Internet site or blog, create a basic text/web page, post documents (Word, Excel, PDF, PowerPoint, Access, videos, podcasts, photos, samples of student work, and just about anything else), or just put text/graphics directly on your Moodle page. In other words, these features let you add content to your Moodle course in the same way that you might post content on a classroom web page. One of my favorite things about Moodle is how easy it is to hide/show any piece of content. For a class you teach each year, you can hide many of the re-usable materials at the beginning of the year and then just make them visible again at the appropriate point in the class.

Depending on what you post, these resources can make life easier for both teacher and students in instances where the student is home ill, must miss class for other reasons (sports, field trips, ...), or in the case of materials such as PowerPoint and videos, needs to be able to see materials more than once to master content. Your site could also be made available to resource staff.

Groups:

Moodle’s “groups” feature can be very powerful for separating students into separate groups for certain projects. Groups are a key way in which Moodle facilitates the delivery of differentiated instruction. Wikis, forums, and chats lend themselves particularly well to the use of groups. Various settings are possible, including one where the students only see the others in their group as they work on the activity, and not the content produced by those in other groups.

Wikis:

A Moodle “wiki” functions like most other wikis. It is a way to create a collaboratively authored web page. It is a web page that everyone in the class (or in a particular group) can create and edit together. Wikis are great for a group project or for creating a growing body of knowledge about a topic being studied. Teachers can easily see which students have contributed (and which have not).

Quizzes:

Although frankly it can feel a little cumbersome, especially as you’re getting started, Moodle enables you to establish a quiz bank from which you can build quizzes. These can be set up to provide the student with instant feedback, even helping them learn where they went wrong on a question. Quizzes are normally graded automatically by Moodle and can even be used for self-assessment (with immediate feedback) by students themselves.

Glossaries:

Glossaries can be created by teachers or even by students. You could assign each student a vocabulary word to research and put in the glossary. If you wish you can set the glossary up to require teacher approval before the student-created entry is actually posted in the glossary. Glossaries can include definitions, examples, and even pictures. If auto-linking is enabled (can be processor-intensive) then any use of a term in the glossary anywhere in the course will be linked to the glossary entry automatically.

Assignments:

Create assignments that students submit electronically. Assign grades/feedback to these assignments according to a grading scale that you define. Eliminates lost assignments and provides tracking of when something was turned in and who has not yet completed an assignment. The full set of assignments submitted could be viewed as an electronic portfolio.

I’d be happy to hear from any of you if you have any questions on this material or wish to discuss Moodle. Feel free to contact me via the Moodle course or in any of the following ways:

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