

The On-line Classroom ***Written by Eileen Anderson***

“Understanding how to seamlessly integrate technology into the curriculum in order to enhance learning is far more important than understanding the intricacies of HTML, or the advanced functions of a digital camera.”

US Department of Education, <http://www.pt3.org/>

With the support and encouragement of our community colleges administrators, an increasing number of faculty members now present their courses on-line. For some, particularly in the math and science departments, technology has long been firmly established. Many other professors have also decided that the nature of their courses makes them suitable for on-line teaching. Still others approach the Internet through two popular software packages that are available on nearly all college campuses today, ***WebCT*** and ***BlackBoard***.

Both ***WebCT*** and ***Blackboard*** are very flexible. It is possible to use only one or two of their functions such as the ***Discussion Boards*** or the ***Chat Rooms*** as a way of facilitating dialogue with on-line students. Both programs also offer fully developed courses for the Internet complete with books, testing packages, research projects and the like. Check with your department head or technology staff to see if one or both of these software packages is being used on your campus.

COZSHAWEN

The technical support groups on our campuses offer classes several times a semester on software packages such as the two described here. Watch for their announcements.

Is On-line Teaching for You?

Do you:

- enjoy computers?
- have lots of time available?
- have good keyboard skills?
- work well alone?
- have courses ready to convert?
- prefer one-on-one to groups?
- individualize instruction?
- accommodate diverse learning styles?
- plan strategies for universal access?
- enjoy working at odd hours?

Related Links

Learn more about these programs at:



<http://www.webct.com/>
<http://www.blackboard.com/>

More Software for Developing Your Course Web Site

Some faculty have chosen another option for the developing their on-line classes – preparing a website themselves using software programs from the major companies. Perhaps the most widely used and the most compatible with college servers is Microsoft's FRONT PAGE. This option is attractive to faculty who have some background in computer design and who prefer the flexibility of laying out their own on-line courses. If this option appeals to you, you will find that FRONT PAGE shares many of the word processing functions as in WORD. It is not difficult to learn and best of all, is widely supported by technology lab staff.

Some professors enhance their courses through web sites provided by their publishers as companions to textbooks. These sites are becoming increasingly sophisticated and often include course-related Internet assignments, self-checking quizzes for each chapter, case studies, and other materials to be used in on-site classrooms but derived from the Internet. Be sure to check with your publishers to see what is available on their web sites to supplement your courses.

You will also notice that Microsoft's WORD (the widely used word processing program) offers additional options for preparing web pages. These work perfectly well but check with your tech center for compatibility with your college servers.

REM-0200

Professors who are already teaching on line are a valuable source of help when you are considering whether or not to follow their lead.

Steps to Developing an Effective On-line Course

1. **Research and develop** your course outline and content. (or start with a course you have already used)
2. **Plan** your individual class presentations and the visuals you will want to upload for each class.
3. **Introduce** each class with a visual overview and advanced organizers that can draw the learners in and touch their experiences, interests, and goals.
4. **Arrange the on-line content** in a logical progression. Include motivational questions along the way.
5. **Document sources** for credibility.
6. **Organize** all the graphic elements and/or demonstrations you will incorporate into each session.
7. **Incorporate** sound and animation carefully to enhance ideas. Do not overuse.
8. **Writing mechanics** on your site need to be error free. Use a proofreader for spelling, punctuation and grammar.
9. **Preview, preview, preview!**
10. **Have fun!**

REM-0200

Our college servers work best (and most trouble-free) when you sign on from Microsoft's INTERNET EXPLORER. It can be downloaded free from [Microsoft](#).

Your will also discover that AOL, NETSCAPE, and all MAC related items are the least compatible.

PowerPoint

Visual aids have always been a part of teaching so their electronic versions are often a good place to start when developing an on-line course. Microsoft's POWERPOINT is a software package that can be used to transfer your overheads or slides for student viewing during an on-line website class. It is an application that comes with Microsoft Office and uses many of the same typing and formatting tools that you know in Microsoft WORD.

Many of your students know POWERPOINT and can be encouraged to use it in presentations and reports. One of its great advantages is that it helps visual learners to focus on and remember the key points from the chapter as they appear on your slides.

Once on the Web, your students can have access to your visuals between classes. The staff in the faculty technology lab s can convert your visuals for you and then show you how simple it is to prepare POWERPOINT slides for yourself. At that point, your website will be well on its way!

POWERPOINT has a function (Notes Page) that can be an essential tool to encouraging the development of critical thinking skills. The individual slides are miniaturized on each page. Then you can also add a series of well-formulated questions. When copies of these pages are duplicated and distributed, they can assist students' preparation and discussions. New vocabulary can also be highlighted as an aid to literacy.

Topics for Discussion

on



Please check to see whether or not the publisher of your texts have web sites to enhance and support their books. As you look for their sites on the Internet, please prepare to tell us on WebCT what you discovered.

What encourages you the most when you consider developing a course to present on the Internet? What holds you back?

Related Links

For Evaluation Rubrics for PowerPoint presentations see:



<http://www.kathyschrock.net/>