Connecting with Students Online
Course Syllabus

Catalog Description

This course will allow teachers new to online teaching to investigate and learn about best practices in connecting with students in an online environment. The course is aimed at Minneapolis Public Schools teachers in ALC (Alternative Learning Centers) who will be using a pre-written online curriculum during the school year, and/or during summer school to work with students doing credit makeup using web based curriculum. Teachers, upon completing this course will have a better idea of how to deliver curriculum, and work with students online.

Prerequisites

This is an introductory course for teachers. Participants are expected to have regular access to computers. In addition, participants should be proficient with using email, browsing the Internet, and navigating to computer files.

Goals

This course will enable participants to:
Students will learn skills and strategies to:

1. Use the essential features of an online course, and demonstrate understanding of how these features are utilized to facilitate an online course and to create a community of learners
    a.   enrolling students
    b. messaging
    c. forum discussions
    d. synchronous chat
    e. Elluminate
    f. grading and gradebook features
    g. simple editing

2. Understand best practices in online course instruction using the Minnesota Online Instructor Competencies;
3. Describe the unique characteristics of an online learning environment and discuss how it is similar and different from a traditional classroom;
4. Develop facilitation skills that foster reflective discussions leading to deeper learning;
5. Develop an understanding of how to assess student work and encourage student accomplishment using the tools available in Moodle;
6. Identify and discuss issues related to online course management, including copyright, student engagement, diversity, and student time management.
7. Develop a student communications plan that can be used to plan for student pacing, and contact.

Assessment and Course Requirements

Each session includes readings, an activity, and a discussion assignment, which participants are required to complete.

Course Products
Participants are expected to:

1. complete selected course readings and activities and reflection activities.
2. respond to online discussions in each of the course sessions.
3. complete skill exercises to increase skill in using the Moodle tools and resources.
4. complete a communications plan for strategies of communication and management of an online class.
5. complete a pre-survey and a post survey
6. Meet with other class participants in 1 synchronous online session mid-course, and in 1 face to face meeting at the end of the course.

Discussion Participation
Participants will be evaluated on the frequency and quality of their discussion board participation. Participants are required to post a minimum of two substantial postings each session, including one that begins a new thread and one that responds to an existing thread. Postings that begin new threads will be reviewed based on their relevance, demonstrated understanding of course concepts, examples cited, and overall quality. Postings that respond to other participants will be evaluated on relevance, degree to which they extend the discussion, and tone.

Required Readings, Activities and Assignments

Session One: The concepts of teaching online
In this session, participants will be able to compare the online and traditional classroom learning environment, and to understand how the Minnesota Online Instructor Competencies relate to them. We will read about what it takes to be an online instructor and explore a variety of websites and videos discussing the management of an online classroom.

Session Two: The tools to teach online
In this session participants will investigate how a learning management system such as Moodle can enhance student learning. Participants will read about a variety of Moodle tools and explore their use in a "sandbox" course.

Session Three: Assessing student work
 In this session, participants will experiment with, and discuss the assessment of student work in an online environment. Participants will also explore how the Moodle gradebook works, at ways to make simple edits in Moodle, and then put this information to use by grading sample student work in a "sandbox" Moodle course.

Session Four: Student progress and communication
In this session, participants will investigate the pedagogy of student pacing, and investigate a variety of methods communicating with students, including using synchronous and asynchronous tools such as the Moodle message forum and elluminate. Participants will read about discussions,

and their facilitation, and explore how other online teachers facilitate student progress in an online class.

Session Five: Course management
In this session, participants will read about discuss common issues associated with online course management, including copyright and intellectual property and academic honesty. Participants will post what they have learned in a group wiki project.

Session Six: Course wrap up
In this session, participants will brainstorm methods of encouraging student engagement, and finalize their own plans for working with students in an online course. Participants will be shown how to enroll students into a Moodle class in. The course will end with a face to face meeting to share ideas and to ask additional questions, prior to being placed into their course, where they will be working with high school students.