

# 5 Things You Should Know About.....MOODLE



## Scenario

Mr. Sanchez teaches three sections of a World Geography class at Main Street High School. He has 40 students in each section, for a total of 120 students. Main Street High School offers an Independent Study Program for those students who, for various reasons, do not attend school on campus. Mr. Sanchez has 18 students who participate in this Independent Study Program. Three students are traveling with their families around the U.S. for the first four months of school. They will be staying with relatives as they travel from state to state and they will have use of a computer with Internet access. Five students will be out of school for the year on hospital-to-home care, and they too will have use of a computer with Internet access. The remaining ten students are participating in the Independent Study Program for behavior or other academic reasons, and they will have use of a computer with Internet access either at home or at the public library.

Mr. Sanchez needs to figure out a way to make course materials and assignments available to all 120 of his students, as well as deliver course content. He also needs to be sure that all 120 students feel comfortable working with each other, even though 18 of his students will not be on campus. How will he do this? Enter.....MOODLE!

Mr. Sanchez got the idea to use MOODLE because he has taken an online graduate class through an out-of-state university and he has enjoyed attending class when it fits with his work schedule. He liked the idea of accessing course materials and assignments 24/7, and collaborating with classmates from all over the globe, benefitting from their experiences and expertise. Because of these reasons, Mr. Sanchez will be using MOODLE to teach not just his World Geography courses, but all of his courses this year.

Because MOODLE is fairly user-friendly, two other teachers in his department, and nine other teachers school-wide have decided to use MOODLE to teach some or all of their courses this year. Additionally, Mr. Sanchez, along with all of the teachers in his department, will be using MOODLE to communicate with each other regarding department issues, course materials/assignments, course content, academic standards and testing, student achievement, and various other collaborative projects.

## What Is It?

MOODLE (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) is an Open Source Course Management System (CMS) that works like SSU's WebCT. Like the university classes, teachers can create dynamic web sites for their classes and students. MOODLE must be installed on a web server in order to function and be accessible to all.

MOODLE can function on many levels: it can be a simple clearinghouse for classroom information or be expanded into a true online community including blogs and wikis. Because MOODLE is installed on your own web server there is no one to tell you what you can and can't do with the problem. The program is open source, meaning that it is not only free to use but is supported by hundreds of different users, many of whom have created their own content to the program that you can use at no cost. This community is a great source of information for modifying MOODLE and finding fun new uses for the program.

## How Does It Work? Are There Downsides?

MOODLE can be installed on a web server, on an individual computer, or at a web hosting company. MOODLE runs on UNIX, Linux, FreeBSD, Windows, Mac OS X, NetWare, and any other system that supports PHP and a database including *most* webhost providers. It can be used as a single-teacher site or hosted by a 50,000-student university. MOODLE can be customized by staff programmers and is flexible and changeable(i.e.: creating plug-in for specific new functionality).

To access the site, users sign in, type in a password, log in and choose the task or function. MOODLE has a range of tools and allows teachers to post a glossary, assignments, readings, essay questions, quizzes, surveys, videos, and sound clips for their students online. Teachers can access a grade book and post grades. MOODLE includes *QuickMail* which allows teachers to send e-mails with attachments to students. *MyFiles* allow students and teachers to share files with selected groups. Teachers can track student activity to see which parts of the course students prefer. Students can access the above functions, send in homework to their teachers, discuss course material with classmates online, and check their grades.

Disadvantages include: the fixed block at the top wastes screen space; less intuitive than some other course management systems; security issues, and confusion when MOODLE features are changed without warning. There is no Tech Support to call, so problems must be solved by consulting the MOODLE online community and the user's ingenuity.

# MOODLE

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## Who's Doing It?

Many institutions use MOODLE as their platform to conduct fully online courses, while some use it simply to augment face-to-face courses (blended learning).

MOODLE is used in 207 countries in over 75 languages. The top users include: United States, Spain, United Kingdom, Brazil, Germany, Portugal, Mexico, Australia, Italy and Canada.

MOODLE is used by educators and students all the way from elementary school to university level. MOODLE is currently being used by students and faculty at St. Joseph Central Catholic High School in Fremont. In addition to instruction, students like the social networking offered by MOODLE and teachers appreciate the ability to assign homework, grade assignments, and communicate with students.

Another example includes Northridge State University where MOODLE is being used in the majority of classes for a range of subjects and is gradually replacing WebCT & Black Board Vista.

## Why Is It Significant?

*"A social constructivist view of knowledge and learning implies that learning occurs in situated sociocultural contexts and that knowledge is apprehended and appropriated in and through social interaction, dialogue, negotiation, and contestation. In the contemporary blend of "old" and "new" information environments, people draw on diverse sources of information, means of communication, and (virtual) community engagements, which suggests that learning and information exchange and production occur in socially interactive communities of learners." (Luke, pg. 398) "These new technologies constitute not only a set of tools, but an environment -- a space, a cyberspace -- in which human interactions happen. More and more the Internet is described as a 'public space', a 'collaborative environment'." (Burbles, pg.4) "Neighborhood Small School attempted to offer students another space, in addition to the physical and emotional space...to demonstrate and deepen their understanding of academic subjects and nourish and develop 'whole students.' This space was designed in opposition to a normative logocentric space offered by schools" which "usually limited academic literacy to the ability to read and write print-based texts and viewed literacy as unconnected to specific social contexts." (Parker, pg.7)*

MOODLE is a significant technology because it looks at how educational institutions can bring learning to the space (cyberspace) where today's digital natives—our students—already spend so much time. MOODLE technology allows for: communication, collaboration, integration, interactivity, construction of new knowledge for others to experience, social networking and learning about behavior within these networks, and development and contribution to meaningful learning experiences where everybody learns from everybody—everybody is a student and a teacher.

## Where Is It Going? Implications for Teaching & Learning?

MOODLE sites are growing exponentially worldwide and are utilized as a Course Management System beyond educational institutions by corporations, government and military organizations, and the healthcare industry.

MOODLE 2.0 is scheduled for beta release in late 2009 offering greater stability of existing features and numerous enhancements including, but not limited to, expanded file handling capabilities of internal and external repositories (accessing information within your MOODLE site and beyond your MOODLE site), and portfolio management.

The implications for teaching and learning are embedded in the social constructionist pedagogical philosophy of MOODLE'S developer, Martin Dougiamas. His primary mission is to stabilize MOODLE'S features and functionality then focus on enhancements that inherently promote collaborative learning environments. Using Web 2.0 technology, MOODLE learning environments offer students and teachers a platform for sharing and showcasing information, projects, and assignments. The traditional classroom is extended and multimedia literacy skills are developed through the use of blogs, wikis, messaging, and posting of multimedia projects. The social constructionist philosophy emphasizes learning as an active engagement among teacher(s) and students, with teachers sharing in the learning process and students sharing in the teaching process. The broader implications for MOODLE and other collaborative learning environments is a call for sweeping changes in our traditional educational delivery system that includes extending active engagement with teachers, students, and the community.

### Resources:

[www.moodle.org](http://www.moodle.org)    [www.moogoo.com](http://www.moogoo.com)    <http://demolabo.com/moodle>  
<http://docs.moodle.org/>    <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moodle>  
[http://docs.moodle.org/en/Teacher\\_documentation](http://docs.moodle.org/en/Teacher_documentation)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNCZ3xNWPvY>  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WvCiv5KCbeE&fmt=22&annotation\\_id=annotation\\_300890&feature=iv](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WvCiv5KCbeE&fmt=22&annotation_id=annotation_300890&feature=iv)