Reflecting on Learning Support Roles to Enhance Instructional Effectiveness

A framework for strategically choosing and using online tools

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Overview

• 11 learning support roles educators play using online tools
• Origin of the framework and how we are using it
• How you can use the framework for reflection and instructional improvement in blended learning
The challenge of choosing and using tools

- Teachers are challenged to navigate and coordinate use of various technology tools
- Every teacher and context is different - one approach does not suit all
Blended learning continuum

- Fully online curriculum with all learning done online and at a distance and no face-to-face component
- Fully online curriculum with options for face-to-face instruction, but not required
- Mostly or fully online curriculum with select days required in classroom or computer lab
- Mostly or fully online curriculum in computer lab or classroom where students meet every day
- Classroom instruction with significant, required online components that extend learning beyond the classroom and beyond the school day
- Classroom instruction integrating online resources, but limited or no requirements for students to be online
- Traditional face-to-face setting with few or no online resources or communication

Research Context

Importance of formal and informal interactions between adult educators and students in F2F space

- Student engagement
- Persistence
- Development


iRemix platform: an online social learning network

- Closed social learning network
- Profile pages
- Groups
- Access to mentors
- Ability to share and comment on projects and have discussions
- Self-paced student curriculum
- Learning badges
- Assessment rubric
- Embedded flash-based design tools to enable students to do projects on their own time
## Aligning online actions with learning support roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role definition</th>
<th>Examples from <em>iRemix</em></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience.</strong> View what youth are doing online</td>
<td>(A) View or read student work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Encourager.</strong> Encourage youth about work or participation</td>
<td>(H) Comment: <em>Jamie this is pimp, the details from the shoes to the chain are nice. Great Job!!</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluator.</strong> Provide grades, ratings, badges, or other formal assessments</td>
<td>(A) Rate student work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sociocultural Friend.</strong> Exhibit personal approachability/friendship/mentorship, including social posts, off-topic conversation</td>
<td>(A) Award or create badge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learner.</strong> Learn from youth</td>
<td>(A) Post a status update</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning Broker.</strong> Connect youth with learning opportunities (people, activities, etc.)</td>
<td>(A) Edit/create profile page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model.</strong> Share own creative work/ process</td>
<td>(H) Comment: <em>LOL! I love Boondocks, too!</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(H) Comment: Thanks for sharing. I did not know this before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(H) Comment: <em>check [how to do this] with Ms. Ammond or Mr. Vireo.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(H) Blogpost: [Animation created by educator]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Research Questions

• How are educators using online systems to interact with students?

• How well do tools support those interactions (or not)?

• How can we design for more and better interactions for learning?

• How can we support teachers to use online environments effectively?
Online Learning Support Roles

**INSTRUCTOR**
Directly teach a concept/skill. Provide an assignment, prompts, or feedback to further student thinking or work.

**EVALUATOR**
Provide grades, ratings, or other formal assessments.

**AUDIENCE**
View what youth are doing online.

**ENCOURAGER**
Encourage youth about work or participation.

**SOCIO-CULTURAL FRIEND**
Show personal approachability, building rapport.

**LEARNING BROKER**
Connect youth with learning opportunities (people, activities, etc.).

**PROMOTER**
Showcase youth participant work.

**MODEL**
Share own creative work/process.

**MONITOR**
Impose or suggest rules of behavior online.

**RESOURCE PROVIDER**
Provide learning resources (how-to guides, links, embedded media, etc.).

**LEARNER**
Learning skills or content from youth.

Denise C. Nacu, Caitlin K. Martin, Nichole Pinkard & Tené Gray (2014): Analyzing educators’ online interactions: a framework of online learning support roles, Learning, Media and Technology, DOI:10.1080/17439884.2015.975722
Online learning support roles are played differently

**Traditional literacy teacher, female**

- Inst: Prompt
- Encourager
- Inst: Direct
- Resource provider
- Learning broker
- Socio-cultural
- Model
- Learner

**Online mentor, female**

- Inst: Prompt
- Encourager
- Inst: Direct
- Resource provider
- Learning broker
- Socio-cultural
- Model
- Learner

**Traditional literacy teacher, male**

- Inst: Prompt
- Encourager
- Inst: Direct
- Resource provider
- Learning broker
- Socio-cultural
- Model
- Learner

**Online mentor, male**

- Inst: Prompt
- Encourager
- Inst: Direct
- Resource provider
- Learning broker
- Socio-cultural
- Model
- Learner
Reflecting on Online Learning Support Roles

- Adult mentors reflected on the roles they played
- Sharing and discussion

- **How do you see yourself as a mentor?**
- **What roles are important to you?**
- **What supports do you need to be effective online?**
Rethinking Assumptions

• What online learning support roles are important to you?

• What are your goals in using online tools?

• Which features can you use more to emphasize certain roles?

• How are you using the face-to-face classroom time?
Example: My Reflection

Typical course:

- Develop software design skills
- Learn and apply design principles, concepts, and methods
- 25-30 students face-to-face

Tools and techniques

- Desire to Learn (D2L)
- Software design and prototyping tools
- Short lectures
- Collaboration in groups on projects
- Whole group and small group critiques
Face-to-face during class meetings

- Present content through short lectures: Instructor
- Explain assignments: Instructor
- Personal feedback and help: Instructor, Encourager
- Build rapport with students: Friend
- Build relationships among students: Friend
- Coordinate group work and discussions
Online using D2L

- Provide grades and feedback: *Evaluator*
- View student work: *Audience*
- Provide examples, resources, links: *Resource Provider*
Email, office hours

- Make personal connections: *Friend*
- Provide help and encouragement: *Encourager*
- Broker connections to people and resources: *Learning Broker*
Learning Support Roles

• How well am I using tools to support my goals?

• How can I make improvements?
  – How can I better **promote** exemplary work created by students?
  – How can I better **model** ways of approaching and solving problems?
You?

What online tools do you use?

– What learning support roles are important to you?

– How do you want to use your face-to-face time?

– How can you best take advantage of online tools?
Thank you!

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