



# EVOLVING PRACTICES OVER TIME

Cyberlearning Compass:  
Navigating the waters of blended learning

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# Western Adler School

**TYPE** Public charter school in Chicago

**STUDENT POPULATION** 500 K-8 students

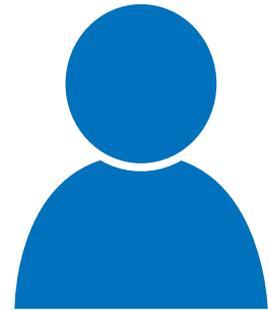
**STUDENT ETHNICITIES** 91% Latino, 7% African American, and 1% white

**LOW INCOME** 90%

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS** 39%

## Mr. Mauer

English language arts and Social studies and Reading  
4 years in the field; Western Adler is his first school  
Year 1 and 2: 6th grade  
Year 2: 7th grade  
Year 3: 8th grade



## Student Population

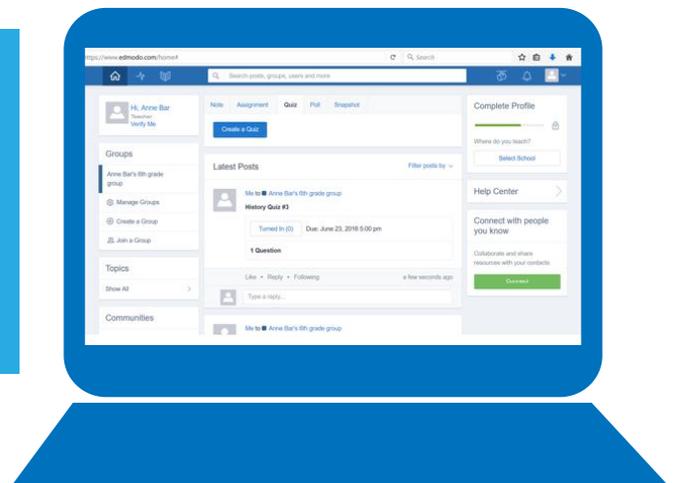


*"The culture here is they're very reserved, which allows for easier classroom management, I would say, but a different type of style. You really have to work to get kids to participate and raise their hands...most of the challenge is getting them comfortable enough to participate and speak in front of the class and share their ideas."*

—Mr. Mauer

## School Technology Platforms

The school had a mandatory student data management system that Mauer used to track student attendance and input formal progress, including grades and test scores. He also was encouraged and trained to use EdModo to direct assignments and quizzes to students as one-time events, and to allow students to input queries of clarification about content or assignments.



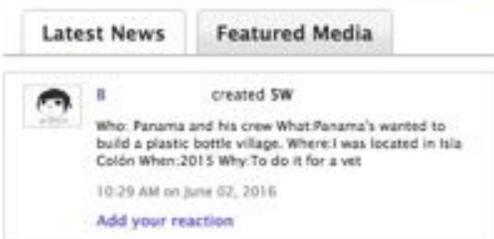
# Background

As a first year teacher, Mr. Mauer was part of a school collaboration with digital media artist-mentors. Mentors visited his class once a week to work with students to translate their written work into multi-media artifacts such as podcasts, videos, and graphics, blending traditional literacy with digital media literacy. As part of this project, they used a private online social learning network called iRemix, where students submitted work, looked at and commented on the work of others, and received feedback and assessment from mentors outside of class time.

Mauer's involvement in the project was "definitely not by choice... My team lead teacher said, 'You're doing [this project]' and I said, 'Okay...' She said, 'It's about technology' and I was super hesitant because I'm not good with technology." Mr. Mauer did not have any social media accounts and was an infrequent internet user on his own time.



## Activity Feed



The *activity feed* allows users to publish media and view the work of their peers.

*Reaction tags* allow users to provide feedback for a specific artifact.

"I was super hesitant because I'm not good with technology."  
—Mr. Mauer

## Reaction Tags



### Features matter:

You can make decisions about the ones that align with your goals



# iRemix

Mauer initially focused on the importance of including different forms of technology in his classroom because he wanted his students to be comfortable using laptops, the Internet, and creative production tools to prepare for the future. He also recognized how much the students liked participating.

His second year of teaching, Mauer chose to continue using iRemix with his students—even after the formal artist-mentor collaboration was over. He watched how the development of the creative artifacts and use of the online space initiated sharing and discussion, engaging a high number of shy students who were hesitant to offer their opinions, perspective, and creativity in public.

*A lot of these kids don't have Facebook or whatever, so I think they're all like, they can't wait to get it, this is their opportunity to try it out... They have a profile, portfolio. They can see each other's work. They can see a whole history of videos, things like that... They love going on there and checking each other's work out, especially if it has to do with photos... If I say, 'You have free time to go on iRemix,' they get excited for that. They feel like it's more personal."*  
—Mr. Mauer

## Student Comments



**A** commented: "Interesting topic and nice details! Great job Cleo!"



**B** commented: "This very good Dan but i think you should add pictures of yourself or voiceover."

*"We have a lot of shy kids, so we'll present those projects. They'll present an iMovie and you see a total different movie than you would expect from a kid that's pretty shy. The feedback that they give each other in person, 'oh I love that video,' is really cool to see."*  
—Mr. Mauer

The work assigned by Mauer on the system was required, but not formally graded. Instead, he monitored the classroom during iRemix work and presentation days to ensure that everyone had posted. During iRemix work time and classroom free time, he encouraged students to look at the posted work of classmates and comment on the work of others. Mauer purposefully did not utilize the more formal learning management aspects of iRemix like assessment of student work or critique, because "throughout the classroom you're teaching and you're guiding them towards an end goal, and a lot of times it's redundant to go back and leave feedback again because you've talked to them a couple times." He did consistently provide brief encouraging statements on student work using comments or "reaction" tags, claiming "there are some kids that need that extra push or 'okay' to contribute."

## Grading Rubric

### Review Artifact Submission

**Evaluate Submission** Reject Submission

Rate the learner's artifact submission with pass or fail

Pass  Fail

Status: Completed

Tell the student what you think about their submission:

Provide feedback

Great work! You did some excellent research here, and your radio delivery sounds really professional.

## Student Media List

Student's Videos (23)

- Illia's Arctic Presentation
- Snake Island Movie
- Allegiant Book Report
- Examples of Irony
- Best Class Trip Movie
- My I Am Poem
- Chicago fire iMovie
- One of the worst days ever
- Illia's Green Screen

# Discussion Questions

## Case reflections

**How did Mauer use different platforms for different purposes? Why?**

**How did Mauer's intentions for his students change over three years? What were some of the reasons for the shifts?**

**How did Mauer's changing intentions play out in his use of specific features on iRemix? Which features did he use?**

## Personal reflections

**Did you find any commonalities between your own practices and Mr. Mauer's?**

**What was the first tech tool you introduced into your classroom?**

How was it introduced?

Was it your choice? Do you still use it today? Why?

**How many tech tools do you use regularly?**

Hardware, software, apps, websites, etc. How do you make those decisions?

What are the features you use frequently? What are some features that you choose not to use? Do you have time to explore all of the features on a site or tool, or do you stick with what you know?



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