Cyberlearning Compass

Navigating the waters of blended learning

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Introduction

basic functions.

Online learning environments are rapidly becoming part of the education landscape for K12. As such, educators are inundated with opportunities, decisions, suggestions, and requirements about technology use in their unique learning environments.

How can we navigate this complex situation in a way that supports educators to be at the

We have spent three years engaged in NSF-sponsored research in collaboration with educators and learners in formal and informal middle and high school learning environments using online platforms. This website translates our findings into resources for teachers, informal educators, and administrators to promote conversation and empower informed decision-making about both technical tools and practices of use. Authentic voices and stories from the field are at the center of these materials. The potential benefits of online learning are exciting. Learners in lower-resourced schools can get access to high quality content; Personalized learning allows individuals to seek out their own pathways that are connected to prior experiences and future



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goals; Teachers have a myriad of tools and data at their fingertips with which to engage learners in dynamic 21st century learning practices. However, the benefits are mediated by serious challenges. There is growing spending at school and district levels without clear accountability; There is unequal access to opportunities for areas with lower SES; Although there is lot of data captured, we are often not entirely sure what it means or how to make it actionable at individual and classroom levels; Decisions about tools are often made at multiple levels, and how to best use them is often not as well resourced as purchasing the tools themselves. School leaders and pre- and in-service teachers need opportunities for intentional planning and reflection. There is little support to guide thoughtful implementation that aligns with individual educator goals for their unique classroom, and often not enough time to process the myriad of platforms being introduced at different levels, including district and school-wide rollouts. As more and more educators adopt new technologies into daily practice, they need to be prepared to put them to use beyond the technological fluency needed for the most

This resource was developed as a contribution to the larger conversation of networked technology use in K12 educational environments. The conversation is escalating and is often outpaced by the speed with which new technologies are offered and adopted and often replaced





Our suite of materials is anchored around a cyclical set of practices that identify specific ways to reflect, plan, and act around the use of online platforms in learning environments. Materials to support this work include: (a) Frameworks for identifying and analyzing online learning platforms, including educator online support roles and relevant features and practices and 21st century learning activity and relevant features and practices. Together, these frameworks, emerging from research in authentic environments, can be used for evaluating systems on their strengths and weaknesses, looking at a platform and feature level of analysis. (b) Cases of educators, K12 learners, and communities in formal and informal learning environments using online platforms, highlighting goals, successes, and challenges in actual use scenarios, mapped onto our framework. Multimedia cases are constructed from a rich collection of qualitative and quantitative data gathered through interviews, surveys, and social network use data. These cases include reflection questions to engage discussion and planning for educators in similar environments in the fluctuating landscape of technology-enriched

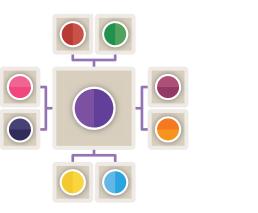
digital youth network

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Framing This Work

10 Major Themes

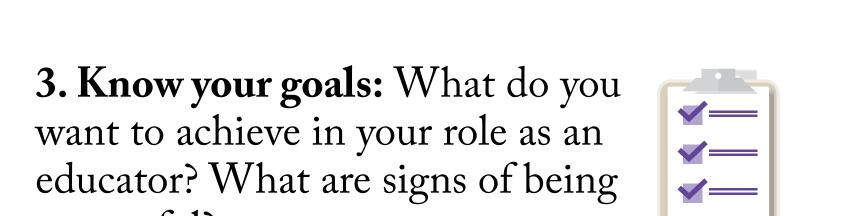
1. Play multiple roles: You can plan intentional and varied roles



2. Features matter: You can make decisions about the ones that align with your



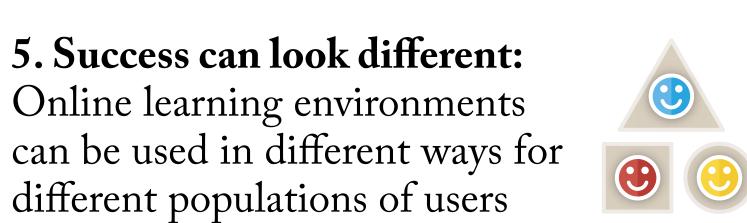


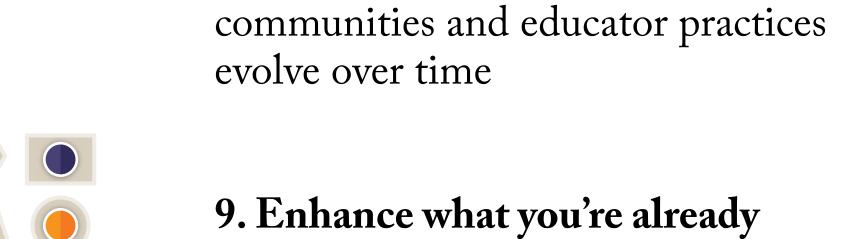


4. Look beyond the online platforms to provide unique learning opportunities and look at success in different



5. Success can look different: Online learning environments can be used in different ways for



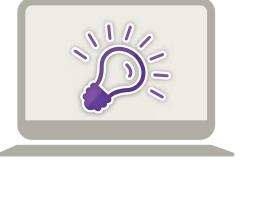


doing: Are you repeating work that you are already doing in the face-to-face classroom? Are you doing the same things across multiple platforms?

8. Take your time: Learning

6. Broker opportunities: Online

school to powerful learning in



10. Know your kids: What they are interested in, how they envision tech and their role in the future, tech experiences



Actual scenarios, mapped onto our framework

To understand patterns of online participation in formal and informal learning environments, we developed case portraits of learners, educators, and communities working with online social networking platforms. Each of the cases presented in this work highlights a different opportunity for reflection, planning, and



Each case includes:

Theme: A description of the thematic opportunity for reflection, planning or action from our work;

Goal: Instructions for what to imagine and design in the challenge;

Case narrative: A rich story to illustrate the nuanced, challenging, real-world situation from which the case data is derived.

Discussion questions: Prompts to reflect on this scenario, tie it to your own experiences, and come up with new ideas and solutions in your own practice.

Related resources: Project frameworks to orient reflection questions, research papers from this team that expand on the ideas, and external articles for educators related to this topic.

Adult Online Support Roles

Adult educators and mentors in the lives of young people can play a variety of different roles. Some have been uniquely identified as supporting youth learning in both face-to-face and online environments. Specific platform features can help you to play these roles for learners in the online space.

	Roles Description	Features	Specific Examples
Looking Around	Audience. View what youth are doing online, including looking at student work, forum posts, discussions, etc.	Ability to open individual youth's posts, work, and profile pages to look more closely at what they are doing and who they are. Community spaces where you can see work across kids, such as the activity feed, debates, forums, and groups.	Classroom conversation: "Hey, I saw the article you wrote for the school's blog yesterday. How often will you be writing stories? I'd like to read more of them!"
	Learn from youth around content or process. Spend some time looking through any activity feeds, portfolios, profile pages, etc.	This is related to the AUDIENCE role. When you are checking out what kids are doing, you might be surprised that you learn new content, new strategies, new media possibilities, or new things about the students and their expertise.	Classroom conversation: "In the last class, Amaya showed me how to use the green screen tool in iMovie. I've never used it before, but I think I understand it now!"
Instructing	Seed work. Deliver an assignment, challenge, or activity to youth that generates some sort of work.	Many ways to communicate a task to youth. Blogposts, Creating a debate or message (a task for an individual youth).	Teacher blogpost: Click on the links and answer the questions: a. Which photo is the most powerful to you? Why? b. Which historical photo is the most shocking to you? Why?
	Define/Present. Directly define, share, present a particular concept or skill or information.	Submitting a <i>blogpost</i> or posting a <i>comment</i> that has information that you relay directly to a student or group of students.	Mentor blogpost: "Here are some step- by-step instructions for using the green screen effect in iMovie"
	Prompt. Provide prompts, questions, and/or offer specific feedback on youth work and posts to further student thinking or project work	Comments or Reaction tags (a "Like" button).	Mentor comment: What do you mean by that? Can you give some specific examples? Mentor comment: I'd love to see a step by step on how you made this piece. Can you post that soon? It might help others!
Giving Feedback	Encourager. Positive language used to support youth confidence and continued participation. Encouragement is often (1) feedback on submitted work, including informal assessments; (2) prompts for youth to share or participate.	Submitting a <i>blogpost</i> or a <i>status update</i> that congratulates or encourages the entire group, or <i>commenting</i> or using <i>reactions</i> directly on a youth post or profile page. You can also encourage in your own multimedia projects.	Teacher comment: This is so creative! Great work! Mentor comment: I was shocked at how fast you learned to use these tools! Mentor comment: Come back next time to learn some new skills to combine with your drawing skills.
	Promoter. Showcase youth participant work.	Featuring work, <i>reposting</i> something students have done and calling out why others should take a look, posting a <i>comment</i> that calls out that others should look at this as an exemplar, some <i>reactions</i> that identify the work as one of the best.	Teacher Comment: Click on the video to watch the championship poetry slam from Room 208
	Evaluator. Provide grades, ratings, badges, or other formal assessments.	Submitting a <i>star rating</i> of student work in the system, <i>assessing work on a pathway</i> , allowing them to move forward in the pathway, <i>awarding a badge</i> .	Teacher Badge Description: This badge represents the completion of the Government Comparison pathway. Earners of this badge had to employ online research skills, simple image manipulation tasks using a photo editor, and presentation design techniques to compare two different systems of government.
Making Connections	Learning Broker. Connect youth with learning opportunities (people, workshops, activities, online opportunities, etc.)	Linking students to new opportunities or people can occur through <i>messages</i> or <i>comments</i> directly to individual students. <i>Blogposts</i> , <i>announcements</i> , and <i>status updates</i> can also do this for entire groups.	Mentor comment: Check with Ms. Asia or Mr. Avri Mentor announcement: Everyone should sign up for the City of Learning event this Saturday: [info and link here]
	Resource Provider. Provide learning resources (examples of work, how-to guides, links to sites, embedded media, etc.)	Comments or messages directly to an individual; Blogposts for all youth.	Mentor blogpost: Download the folder to hear the audio clips. You can drag the files into Garageband for your radio broadcast.
Building Relationships	Social-cultural "friend." Exhibiting personal approachability/ friendship/ mentorship, including social posts, off-topic conversation.	Profile page, status update, comment.	Mentor comment: It was fun to have you in the workshop, Jo. Mentor comment: I love Boondocks, too!
	Model. Share own work and/or process.	Media and blog <i>posts</i> . This can be connected to a lesson (here is how I would do this work) or not (here is a video I made over the weekend).	Mentor post: "Here is my example for the haiku poster challenge. Let me know what you think!"
Managing	Monitor. Impose or suggest rules online (language, behavior, plagiarism, etc.) Manage classroom process and offer technical iRemix help.	Comments or messages directly to an individual, usually on the event that prompted the need for the Monitor role. Announcements or status updates for all youth.	Teacher comment: "Remember, this forum is for social studies content only! If you want to share a personal comment, please send it as a message."
	Organize student interaction. Coordinate students in activities designed to prompt communication or collaboration.	Use grouping features to create online spaces for youth to interact around a specific project or theme. Prompt youth to comment on each others' work.	Mentor comment: "After you post your own video, comment on at least 3 other videos by Friday."

Case Study Excerpt: Evolving Practices Over Time

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

Year 3: 8th grade

English language arts, 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



nigher level, this enables them to kind of get away from traditional projects and create something that's really cool and

Transitioning To Portfolios Of Work

In his third year of teaching, Mr. Mauer began to loop with some of the middle school classrooms, and he had his sixth grade students from the previous year. The following year he had them again as eighth graders. He continued using iRemix from year to year for students to contribute, share, and communicate.

"Typically what we've been doing is, like we've done in years past is, whatever you learn in class, iRemix is a way for kids to be creative from that and upload [media projects]. So it's not necessarily to check assessment, it's a chance for them to be creative."—Mr. Mauer

Mauer also began to recognize the potential for digital archiving, and started to emphasize profiles as

"So if you'd click on a student, you'll see like all the movies that they've done for the past two years; recordings, sounds, which relates somehow to a book report, or relate to an essay that's on there too. So, like the way that I tell the students is, 'You can show somebody an essay that you wrote,' and then be like, 'Here check out my iMovie with it, or my Pixlr with it,' and it's all right there. Especially if it came down to like high school, if they had to for some reason interview, whatever, 'cause it's super competitive, those eighth graders have a pretty extensive portfolio where they can be like, 'Here's my essays. Here's what I've done in language arts and reading. These are the skills that I bring to your high school." —Mr. Mauer

Personal Reflection Questions

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

What tech tool have you been using the longest in your classroom?

How have your practices with this tool shifted over the years? Or haven't they? Why did you make these changes? Have these changes transferred to other tools?

Do your students have online portfolios of their work?

Is this something you would like to incorporate into your classroom?

Do you use any tools capable of creating student portfolios?