

Inclusive Use of Canvas: Recommended Practices & Ed Tech Tools

A major goal of [inclusive pedagogy](#) is to create a [classroom climate](#) that fosters a sense of belonging among students (Armstrong, 2011). Instructors can implement digital tools to promote inclusive learning experiences by supplementing in-person or blended instruction, or use them as primary discussion platforms for online courses. The learning management system, [Canvas](#), contains various features and apps that can bolster learner participation and engagement through community building and multiple modes of communication.

Recommended Practices & Ed Tech Tools

Inclusive Practice Recommendation	Description & Considerations	Potential Ed Tech Tool	Ed Tech Tool Features & Use Cases
Identify areas within the course where student discussion can promote inclusivity	Consider whether certain features and apps are appropriate tools for facilitating such discussions. For example, online discussions can be particularly useful for topics where the contribution of all students is central to learning. In this case, the instructor leverages the software platform to promote inclusive participation.	Canvas Discussion Board	Students can express themselves in written form as an extension of oral discussions occurring in class. Students can also add audio files and videos directly to discussions. Responding to a focused or threaded discussion prompt gives quieter students time to think before they respond. Instructors should note that student responses using this feature are not anonymous, which can have advantages depending on the objectives of the activity. For example, instructors may use this tool to have students introduce themselves to each other as a way to foster community. Teaching fellows or peer tutors can also mediate discussion boards.

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<p>Prioritize features when choosing an online discussion tool</p>	<p>Determine whether attributes such as multimedia capability and anonymity are important for discussions, and choose a tool based on such preferences. Multimedia postings can be useful for students to add artistic and creative work, audio files, animations, videos and other artifacts to supplement discussion. Anonymous discussion boards might be considered for topics that benefit from freedom of thought and expression, or as platforms for students to seek help on points of confusion.</p>	<p>Ed Discussion</p>	<p>Advantages of implementing this tool include: creating opportunities for students to ask questions who might not normally be able to ask them during class (e.g. students in larger classes or those have difficulty attending office hours), fostering student-student dialogue, and enhancing communication lines between instructors and students. Ed Discussion also provides the opportunity to create completely anonymous discussion threads, which can be useful when instructors want to provide a safe space for students to post without being identified, especially if the discussion is a place where students can ask for help from the instructor or fellow classmates. In addition, Ed Discussion allows for monitored posting which gives the instructor the ability to read student posts and choose whether or not to release the post to the class, and also provides an instructor the ability to endorse a student post as a correct or instructor-approved response.</p>
<p>Encourage early and continual student engagement with discussion tools</p>	<p>At the beginning of the course, create an activity that invites students to introduce themselves to the class using an application or feature to build community, and give</p>	<p>Wordpress for Canvas</p>	<p>WordPress for Canvas maintains a similar blog-like feel, which can be linked to and utilized in a Canvas course to foster community through continued student-centered creation of discipline specific content.</p>

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	them practice using the tool. Create additional opportunities for students to utilize the tool over the course of the semester.		
Implement Canvas and external application tools strategically as needed	Canvas features and apps can be re-implemented at any point during the course when more student engagement is desired. Adopting and using a particular ed tech tool need not be a full-semester plan, but rather the application of the appropriate tool to accomplish the desired outcome.	VoiceThread	A step beyond typical text-based online discussions, VoiceThread discussions can be created in a multi-sensory format. Instructors and students post artifacts (videos, audio files, images, PowerPoint slides, etc.), to which video, audio, or text comments can be shared. This approach encourages discussion where students share their ideas in their own authentic voice. For example, students might be asked to add a video or audio file where they introduce themselves to the class. Or an instructor may choose to post a thought-provoking video clip related to class content and invite students to comment.
Ask for student input	Invite students to suggest which features and apps would be most useful for their learning and for building classroom community, and invite their constructive feedback after they utilize the tool.	Feedback & Accessibility Barriers Tool	Instructors can enable the Feedback & Accessibility Barriers tool on their Canvas site, and notify students that they are welcome to provide constructive feedback on their sense of belonging in the course. This feedback can be used to continue to build an inclusive climate.

References

Armstrong, M.A. (2011). Small World: Crafting an Inclusive Classroom (No Matter What You Teach). Thought and Action, Fall, 51-61.

💡 Instructors can consult the Educational Technology team at the Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning for any questions on how to use tools by emailing askpoorvucenter@yale.edu.