ONLINE COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

What is online collaborative learning (OCL)?

Collaborative learning is an educational approach to teaching and learning that involves groups of learners working together to solve a problem, complete a task, or create a product (Laal & Ghodsi, 2012). OCL settings cluster in virtual environments, promoting collaborative work among students and facilitating group learning (Hoppe, 2007). Instructors facilitate OCL by promoting **knowledge construction**, which is the steady accumulation of knowledge mostly through asynchronous online discussions between students and an instructor.

> OCL theory provides a model of learning in which students are encouraged and supported to **work together to create knowledge**: to invent, to explore ways to innovate, and, by so doing, to seek the conceptual knowledge needed to solve problems rather than recite what they think is the right answer (Harasim, 2012).

The social discourse in OCL is not random, but managed in such a way as to **'scaffold'** learning:

- by assisting with the construction of knowledge in ways that are guided by the instructor;

- that reflect the norms or values of the discipline;

- that also respect or take into consideration the prior knowledge within the discipline.

The role of the instructor in OCL is seen as critical, not only in facilitating the process and providing appropriate resources and learner activities that encourage this type of learning, but also in ensuring that the core concepts, practices, standards, and principles of the subject domain are fully integrated into the learning cycle as a representative of a knowledge community or subject domain.

OCL is often promoted through **learning management systems**, which include an area for online discussion forums.

Online discussion forums are different from classroom seminars in some ways:

They are text based, not oral;	They are asynchronous: participants can log in at any time, and from anywhere with an Internet connection;	Many discussion forums allow for 'threaded' connections, enabling a response to be attached to the particular comment which prompted the response

Successful (online) discussion should adhere to several design principles such as:

☐ picking the appropriate technological tool to use

☐ providing students with clear guidelines on online behaviour

☐ providing students with orientation and preparation activities (e.g. technology orientation, explaining the purpose of discussion, etc.)

☐ picking appropriate topics for discussion

☐ setting an appropriate 'tone' or requirements for discussion (e.g. respectful disagreement, evidence-based arguments)
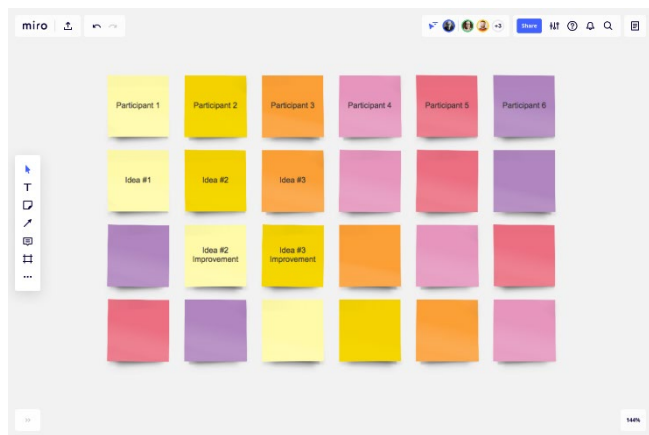
- ☐ providing students with a clear definition of their roles and expectations

- ☐ monitoring student participation individually, and responding accordingly

- ☐ regular, ongoing instructor 'presence'

- ☐ making the link between discussion topics and assessment clear

OCL Strategies for Improved Student Engagement

Miro: Brainwriting

Getting timid and introverted learners to participate more in group activities might be difficult. Such learners, on the other hand, tend to perform better on online platforms where they can offer their opinions anonymously or individually.

Instructors can use techniques like brainwriting to get such students more involved in group work. Instructors can use this method to start a discussion thread on an online forum. They give learners a topic or stimulus to voice their opinions on, either openly or anonymously. **Miro** is a fantastic online tool for brainwriting. It's an online whiteboard platform with a variety of templates for brainstorming and other group work.

Google Jamboard

Google Jamboard is a collaborative place that serves as a digital interactive whiteboard. You might use this for whole-class involvement, with all students responding to a specific prompt or question; you can also build many boards

for different groups to participate to. Students can annotate using a variety of tools, including sketching, text boxes, web photos, and sticky notes. Additionally, you can change the board's background. You could, for example, use a map as a backdrop and have students annotate and identify specific locations and features on the map.

Padlet

Padlet is a digital learning tool that provides a single location for a message board, which can aid teachers and stu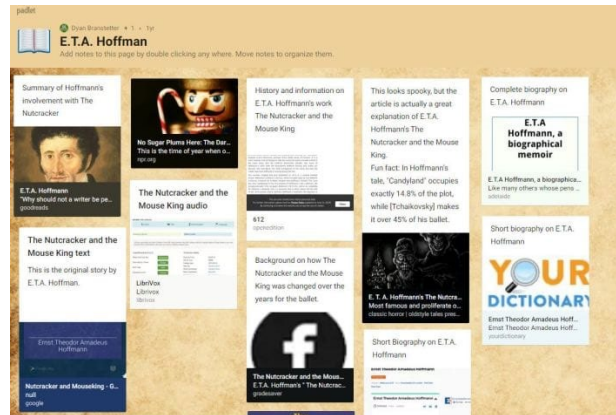dents in class and beyond. Images, links, videos, and documents can all be shown on this digital notice board, which can be made public or private. This means that students, as well as teacherds, can post on the wall. It's a terrific resource for instructors and students because the interactive environment is simple to use and accessible from practically any web browser-capable device.

> *The goal of OCL is not to replace the teacher, but rather to use technology to increase and improve communication between the teacher and the students, with a specific approach to learning development based on **knowledge construction** assisted and developed through **social discourse**.*

References

Bates, A. W. (2015). *Teaching in a digital age: Guidelines for designing teaching and learning.*

Harasim, L. (2012). *Learning Theory and Online Technologies.* New York/London: Routledge

Hoppe, H. U. (2007). Educational information technologies and collaborative learning. In H. U. Hoppe, H. Ogata and A. Soller (Eds.). *The Role of Technology in CSCL* (pp. 1-11). New York: Springer Science+Business Media.

Laal, M., & Ghodsi, S. M. (2012). Benefits of collaborative learning. *Procedia-social and behavioral sciences*, 31, 486-490.

Two design models for online collaborative learning: same or different?

https://www.tonybates.ca/2014/11/28/two-design-models-for-online-collaborative-learning-same-or-different/

10 Collaborative Learning Strategies for Online Teachers

https://www.teachfloor.com/blog/10-collaborative-learning-strategies-for-online-teachers

Collaborative Learning

https://ctl.columbia.edu/resources-and-technology/teaching-with-technology/teaching-online/collaborative-learning-online/

What is Padlet and How Does It Work for Teachers and Students?

https://www.techlearning.com/how-to/what-is-padlet-and-how-does-it-work-for-teachers-and-students

Further Reading and Resources

- [8 Cooperative Learning Practices to Enrich Your Online or Hybrid Classroom](#)

- [Collaborative Activities for Online Learning](#)

- [Reasons Why Collaborative Online Learning Activities Are Effective](#)

- [Facilitating Effective Collaboration in Virtual Student Teams](#)