

Four Digital Resources for Electronic Learning Teams

There are new digital tools that can facilitate progress-driven work around any collaborative task. This collection of four useful resources may help get your electronic learning team off of the ground.

Conducting Synchronous Meetings

Like more traditional teams, electronic learning teams should be engaging in regularly scheduled synchronous meetings that are focused on the kinds of instructional practices that have a positive impact on student learning.

1. *Google Hangouts*

While at first glance it may appear to be a nontraditional option for educators, Google+ Hangouts (www.google.com/+learnmore/hangouts/) is probably the best tool for electronic teams trying to schedule synchronous meetings simply because it (1) allows up to nine people to join a conversation at one time, (2) allows participants to share their screens and collaborate around shared documents, and (3) is completely free. Synchronous meetings held in Google+ Hangouts can also be easily recorded and posted online for future reference.

Creating Shared Documents

Regardless of how they are structured, professional learning teams generate a ton of shared documents: common assessments, sets of essential outcomes, potential lessons, and exemplars of student work, for example. For electronic learning teams, services that allow members to work—synchronously or asynchronously—on these kinds of documents are essential.

2. *Google Drive*

Google Drive (<http://drive.google.com>) is a service that allows groups of users to collaborate around word documents, spreadsheets, presentations, and forms in online spaces. Edits appear automatically, making it possible for team members to work simultaneously on the same document. Teams can then download final products in more traditional formats—Word documents, PDF files, PowerPoint presentations—or post them directly to the web.

Warehousing Team Content

The most efficient learning teams develop systems, structures, and spaces for storing their shared content. When resources are carefully organized and readily available to members, learning teams thrive.

3. *PB Works*

PBworks (<https://plans.pbworks.com/academic>) is a wiki service that offers free basic accounts to educators. *Wikis*—easy-to-edit websites—are a fantastic solution for electronic learning teams looking to create warehouses of shared content because they require little digital skill to master. As long as members can create basic documents and add attachments to emails, they can edit a team wiki.

Tackling Multiple Tasks

For many electronic learning teams, a priority in selecting digital tools is finding services that address multiple collaborative tasks at one time. These all-in-one homes are valuable primarily because they provide many electronic opportunities with a single password.

4. *Edmodo*

Edmodo (www.edmodo.com), a popular free service that has been widely embraced by educators, offers users the ability to carry on asynchronous conversations, conduct group polls, maintain a shared calendar, and create warehouses of team documents. While Edmodo doesn't offer synchronous conversation or shared document creation options, it's popular with educators who often begin using the service to create online homes for their students, too.