A social learning space

WikiGrads is a new social constructive tool designed to streamline peer-to-peer (P2P) interaction, ongoing discussions, and social Q&A in traditional and online classes, on-demand 24/7.

In many of today’s teaching environments, we are throwing away the tremendous potential of digital interconnectivity afforded by Web 2.0 tools. Specifically, we are failing to provide a learning space that leverages differences in understanding among the students themselves. Effective social learning spaces for reciprocal teaching and learning are long overdue in education.

LMS discussion forums are inadequately designed for P2P learning because they lack the activity stream architecture necessary for sustaining activity online. Streams uniquely facilitate many-to-many experiences that can deepen engagement and participation beyond what is possible in lecture or office hours.

We believe “discussion streams” will replace discussion forums and seamlessly evolve classroom and online teaching into blended environments for deeper learning experiences. Given our complex and evolving educational landscape, real solutions must blend traditional teaching spaces with social learning spaces.

Discussion streams make it incredibly easy to:

* Streamline intermittent (asynchronous) communication into many-to-many conversations and social Q&A
* Share files, web links, videos, LaTeX equations, and images
* Share multiple perspectives and representations of class material in a user-friendly digital workspace
* Provide equal access to peer resources and impromptu learning opportunities
* Reduce office hours and amplify interpersonal communication

In contrast to Facebook and enterprise activity streams like Yammer, discussion streams are designed for educators and can be filtered by class week, user contributions (teacher, self, or peer), and feature a document bin for easy navigation and access.

WikiGrads is available as an LMS plugin using the Learning Tools Interoperability (LTI) standard, and is FERPA and WCAG 2.0 compliant.

Deeper learning is not accessible to many students simply because we are not providing a tool for overcoming physical and social barriers to P2P interaction and learning.