

Blackboard Groups: An Active Teaching Tool

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What are Blackboard Groups?

- Allows instructors to divide students into small project-focused groups
- Groups can be configured to allow members to communicate with one another with varying levels of sophistication



Creating Blackboard Groups

Adding a group is easy! Name it and describe it...

Add Group

1 Group Information

Name Global Warming Group

Description

This group will research the effects of global warming on coastal areas. What areas could be endangered? How strong is the global warming evidence? What solutions are possible? (See the rubric attached to my first thread posting)

[Help](#) [Back](#)

Creating Blackboard Groups

Now set the group options.

2 Group Options

Group Discussion Board Available

Group Virtual Classroom Available

Group File Exchange Available

Group Email Available

Group Available Yes No

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

What a Student Sees

Students can access only their assigned group

BE TRAINING FREEDYBOCKE > COMMUNICATIONS > GROUP PAGES



Endangered Species Group

This group will research the ecological effects of extinction. Has the extinction of a particular species been proven to negatively affect the specie's environment? How strong is the evidence? What solutions are possible to prevent extinction? Include a report of efforts to save the American bald eagle. How successful were these efforts? What was done? See the rubric attached to my first thread posting



Global Warming Group

This group will research the effects of global warming on coastal areas. What areas could be endangered? How strong is the global warming evidence? What solutions are possible? See the rubric attached to my first thread posting

What a Student Sees

What a student sees after accessing a group

BE TRAINING FREEDYBOCKE > COMMUNICATIONS > GROUP PAGES > GLOBAL WARMING GROUP > GROUP TOOLS

Group Page: Global Warming Group

- ▶ [Group Discussion Board](#)
- ▶ [File Exchange](#)
- ▶ [Send Email](#)
- ▶ [Group Members](#)

Name	Email
Student A Rn Training	TomSwift@hardyboys.com

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Features



- Group members can perform various tasks
 - Exchange files
 - Communicate *asynchronously*
 - Email
 - discussion threads
 - Communicate *synchronously*
 - chat room

Features

Instructors can...

- Make any group tool available or unavailable
- Make group discussion threads available to entire class

The entire class can benefit from the group's discussion and research!

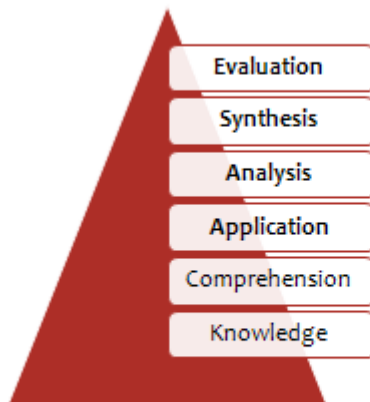
ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Benefits

- Easy to set up
- Wide variety of group tools available to students
- Group activities engage higher-level cognitive skills

For example...

Benefits



Bloom's Taxonomy of
Cognitive Domain

Knowledge
acquired via rote
memorization of
course content is
now *used*

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Benefits

Groups foster a deeper sense of online community

**Group hug,
anybody?**



Some Considerations

- Better File exchange tool needed
 - Needs check-in/check-out option
 - Needs Wiki feature
- Large amount of pre-planning needed
- Clear parameters needed
 - Clear objectives
 - List of acceptable resources
 - Embedded help
 - Rubric

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Some Considerations

- Two levels of assessment needed
 - Individual involvement
 - Group project
- Embedded help needed
 - Links to pertinent web sites
 - Attachments
 - Embedded images (graphs, tables)



Some Considerations

- Other suggestions
 - Post explicit time-table for students
 - Center group projects on core curriculum goals
 - Be available (shift to “help desk” mode!)



ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Good Teaching Practices

GTP#2: Develops Reciprocity and Cooperation among Students

Students separated geographically can collaborate

- Group email
- Discussion threads
- Chat room
- File exchange

Good Teaching Practices

GTP#2: Develops Reciprocity and Cooperation among Students - continued

Using group tools, students can...

- Develop team skills
- Share pertinent knowledge and expertise
- Define and redefine problems and goals

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Good Teaching Practices

GTP#3: Uses Active Learning Techniques

Students can *actively* use course knowledge

- Apply
- Analyze
- Synthesize
- Evaluate

Good Teaching Practices

GTP#3: Uses Active Learning Techniques - continued

An Example...

- Students in a ecology class could be assigned a project on global warming
- This could entail several cognitive skills
 - Analyzing memorized facts about ecological balance
 - Synthesizing with new information
 - Evaluating conclusions

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Good Teaching Practices

GTP#6: Communicates High Expectations

- In itself, group dynamics raise higher expectations
 - Individuals no longer work in isolation
 - Individuals now responsible for the success of the group project

Good Teaching Practices

GTP#6: Communicates High Expectations - continued

- Group tools enable instructors to underscore high expectations
 - Group Discussion Board
 - Group Email
 - Group Collaboration tool

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Good Teaching Practices

GTP#7: Respects Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning

Collaboration calls forth individual talents

- One member may volunteer research skills
- Another may offer expertise in editing
- A third may be the team expert in MLA

Good Teaching Practices

GTP#7: Respects Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning - continued

- *Visual Textbox Editor* enables multi-faceted postings
 - Audio
 - Images
 - Flash
 - Text
- Instructional design teams can provide *Flash* simulations

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

An Active Teaching Tool

- Archaic file exchange system
- Requires much pre-planning
- Requires much support

- None-the-less, supports several good teaching practices
- A vital way to launch students into active learning



ADDITIONAL NOTES: