Getting Started With . . .
Creating Accessible Course Content

Blackboard

Release 9.1 Service Pack 8

Accessible course content can be used by everyone, to the greatest extent possible, regardless of age, ability, or situation. Awareness of some of the potential barriers and challenges students face in can help you create an online learning enviroment that accomodates individuals with disabilities, older people, children, novice technology users and others in ways that benefit all users.

This table identifies some of the challenges students face and how you can use specific Blackboard tools and univeral design techniques to help all learners master your course objectives.

Challenge

Learning and Cognition

Neurologically based processing problems

Problems Affecting Learning

- Input through eyes and ears is not received or processed normally
- Using language to organize thoughts or find the right words
- Coordination of large (gross) or small (fine) muscle groups
- Integration of information to draw conclusions, solve problems, speculate by abstraction, sequence, and organize

Blackboard Features

- Create multiple modes of information using the Content Editor to include text, diagrams, video, audio, images, and multimedia
- Build in repetition by allowing multiple test attempts (retakes) and multiple drafts for writing assignments
- Use reinforcement and practice by creating self-tests, collaboration activities, and homework assignments
- Include learning objectives in multiple places including the syllabus, rubrics, and course objectives
- Provide sample responses and feedback for essay and short answer test questions and assignments

Challenge

Culture and Customs

Problems Affecting Learning

- Interpretation of the meaning of colors used in text and imagery is viewed through a cultural lens
- Group dynamics and interactions among group members
- Time, grading, and financial pressure applied from outside sources
- Definition of plagiarism can be seen through a cultural lens

Blackboard Features

- Help students feel comfortable by selecting colors that appeal to them
- Allow students to customize their Blackboard course using the settings in the My Places link
- Create groups that empower all members; consider using sign up sheets so students can self select groups
- Include stakeholders such as parents and coaches by allowing Guests and Observers
- Use SafeAssign to teach students about the correct and expected ways—defined by your school—to cite work and avoid plagiarism

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Challenge

Sensory and Physical

Blindness and low vision

Deaf and hearing impaired

Paralysis, stroke, injury, cerebral palsy, and other movement disorders

Problems Affecting Learning

- Mobility to use computer equipment
- Sensory input to detect course content
- Coordination of large (gross) or small (fine) muscle groups
- Missing the information multimedia elements provide due to low vision or blindness

Blackboard Features

- Format content for assistive technology using heading tags in documents and HTML
- Have keyboard stroke input for the drag-and-drop function and point and click activities
- Use the TAB key to navigate between form fields in attached or linked forms
- Tell users when links open in a new window or they are leaving Blackboard Learn
- Provide alternate assessment schemes such as providing more time for online tests, and avoiding Hot spot question typeS
- Allow for caregiver assistance with a Guest account
- Use the alt and long description fields when adding images and other media
- Use the Mashup tool for embedding YouTube™ videos so users have a more accessible media player

Challenge

Neurological and Psychological

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Mental Illness such as depression, bipolar, schizophrenia

Problems Affecting Learning

- Distraction, disorganization, forgetting, and misplacing things
- Memory, judgment, cognition, organization, social interactions
- Hypersensitive to stress from tests, assignments, and working with others in groups or collaboration sessions
- Receiving, processing, and recalling information while under stress

Blackboard Features

- Build in flexibility to allow students to work offline by attaching documents they can print and other content that can be downloaded and accessed from student's computers
- Allow discussion posts to be collected and printed
- Use Adaptive Release to allow students to work at different paces
- Use Adaptive Release and the Groups tool to provide remedial material
- Allow students to self-select groups and to withdraw from groups
- Record synchronous collaboration sessions so they can be reviewed later
- Use the Tasks tool, Calendar tool, Announcements tool, and Syllabus to post due dates, milestones, and events

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Challenge

Language

English as second language or other language

Problems Affecting Learning

- Trouble understanding jargon, idioms, and slang
- Difficultly reading and comprehending long complex passages of text, for example, sentences with multiple clauses and sub-clauses

Blackboard Features

- Using the Content Editor, simpify the presentation of text by adding bullet points and sequential lists
- Augment text using diagrams, illustrations, and graphs
- Use Learning Modules to present text with a Table of Contents
- Use test and assignment settings to provide clear instructions
- Provide a rubric for each graded item
- Create a Glossary to provide definitions
- Allow students to select a different language pack to translate the Backboard Learn interface (not your content) into another language

Challenge

Technology

Limited access or experience with technology

Problems Affecting Learning

- Low or intermittent bandwidth
- Lack of available hardware—sharing one computer among family members
- Embarrassment over lack of experience or familiarity using hardware or software

Blackboard Features

- Create an orientation Content Area to get students started navigating your course
- Create a Discussion Board forum for user assistance
- Include links to help resources on the Course Menu
- Create a Glossary to provide definitions for technical terms
- Use examples and analogies to explain hardware and software operations
- Use the Groups tool to pair students to help each other
- Provide transcripts



For more information and resources on Blackboard and accessibility visit:

www.blackboard.com/accessibility

help.blackboard.com/instructor/Content/_student/accessibility.htm

blog.blackboard.com/?s=accessibility

www.coursesites.com/s/_UDA

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