

Unit 1 / Part 1

Building Learning Communities in Cyberspace

SPSE 6900

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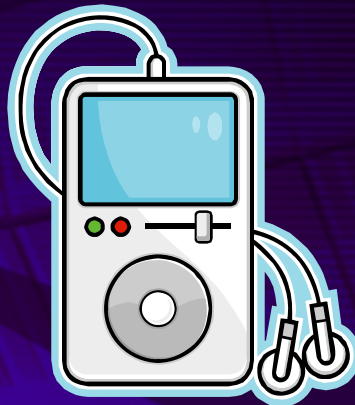
Defining Computer-Mediated Instruction

- **Distance Education**
 - Refers to the provision of learning resources to remote learners
 - May involve distance teaching as well as distance learning



Defining Elements

- Separation of teacher and learner during instruction
- Use of educational media to unite teacher, learner, and content material
- Provision of multiple communication modes
- Concept of “Learner in Charge”



Interaction Within the Community

A “Network” of Learners



KEY Element – Active Learning and Interaction

Interaction between teacher and student

Interaction between students themselves

Interactions within the larger group

Interactions among members of small groups

Who Learns Best in the Online Environment?



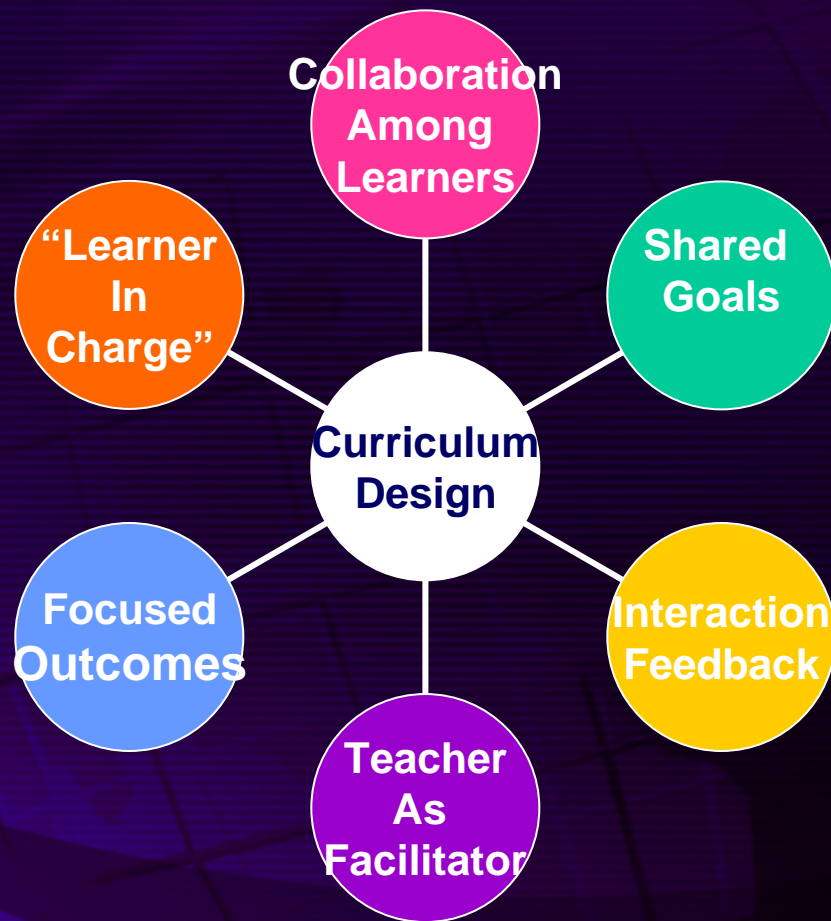
- **Students who are:**
 - **Lifelong Learners**— inquisitive and seeking knowledge
 - **Motivated**—those with high expectations for themselves
 - **Organized**
 - **Goal Oriented**
 - **Task Oriented**
 - **“Interactors”** – Those who like to interact and discuss on a higher level

What type of teacher is most effective in the online environment?

- **The teacher who is:**
 - Goal oriented
 - Strong in curriculum design
 - Highly organized
 - Has high expectations for students
 - Creative
 - A lifelong learner
 - Flexible, flexible, flexible



New Model for Learning



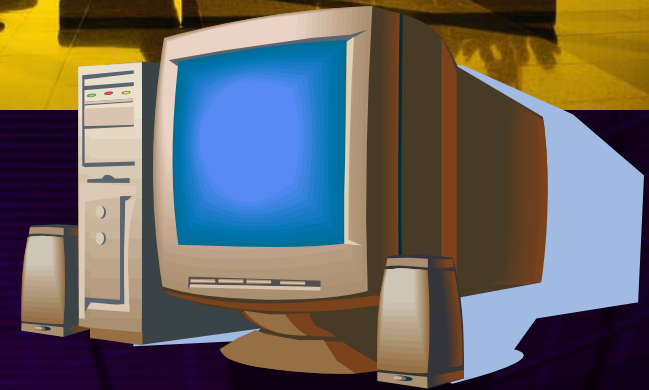
Adapted from Figure 1.1 The New Paradigm for Learning (Palloff & Pratt, 1999)

New Approaches...Things to Consider

- ***Access to Technology***
 - Students must have available hardware and software
 - Students must find the “comfort zone”
- ***Guidelines and Procedures***
 - Teachers must make sure all guidelines and procedures for successfully completing the course are clear and well-defined
 - Use of *technical writing* (plain and simple) helps
- ***Participation & Collaboration***
 - Active participation is a MUST; Collaboration is critical
- ***Transformative Learning***
 - Students must be given opportunities to *learn about learning* in the online environment
- ***Evaluation***
 - Multiple assessment tools are key

The Community Emerges when...

- Students interact and carry on internal dialog in order to formulate responses
- Students feel that the environment is a secure place where their thoughts are acknowledged and welcome
- Student ability to create a mental picture of their peers and teacher is nurtured
- Students create a sense of presence through communication



The Community Grows and Develops when...



- There is a clearly defined purpose
- The online environment becomes a gathering place for exchanging ideas
- It is facilitated by a defined leader (teacher)
- A clear code of conduct is outlined
- The course content is presented in a relevant and interesting manner for all learners

The Importance of Community

- Due to the absence of face-to-face contact, the online learning environment must become a place where students have a sense of autonomy, initiative, and creativity while being able to question, think critically and engage in dialog and discourse.



Signs that the Community has Formed



- Active interaction involving course content and personal communication
- Evidence of collaborative learning
- Socially constructive meaning evidences through questioning and inquiry
- Sharing
- Expressions of support and encouragement among all members

Forms of Electronic Communication



- Email
- Public Electronic Forums
- Bulletin Board Systems
- Electronic Network Chats
- Pay-For-Use Services
- Face-to-Face
Communication that
occurs during learning

Issues in Building Learning Communities

Virtual v. Human Contact,
Connectedness, and
coalescence

Shared responsibilities,
rules, roles, norms, and
participation

Psychological and
spiritual issues

Vulnerability, privacy, and
ethics.



Asynchronous v. Synchronous

- Asynchronous – students logging on to course site any time, anywhere with no set time for all to be online together.
- Synchronous – everyone online at the same time—similar to meeting for an on-campus class.



Time Comparisons of an Online v.Face-to-Face Class

Instructor Activity	Face to Face Class	Online Class
Preparation	2 hours per week Review assigned readings and lecture Prepare in-class activities	2 hours per week to review assigned readings and lecture Prepare discussion questions and activities
Class Time	2 ½ hours per week of assigned class	2 hours DAILY to read student posts, grade assignments, etc.
Follow-Up	2-3 hours per week for individual contact	2 – 3 hours per week for individual contact with students via email
Total Hours Per Week	6 ½ to 7 ½	18 – 19 hours

12 – Step Program for Managing Communication

- Set up specific time each day to read and respond to student messages
- Wait to respond to a message that upsets you and be careful in responding
- Never say anything that you could not tolerate seeing in print on the front page of the paper
- Establish clear priorities for dealing with messages and categorize messages by importance.



Managing the Technology

Learning online involves interacting with peers and teacher

Learning online also involves interacting with hardware, software, and connectivity

REMEMBER:
Technology is a facilitative tool, it should remain functional, simple, visually-pleasing, and user friendly.

