Using Moodle to Develop a Learning Community in a Secondary School

by

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract:
This study is built on the notion that a Moodle Learning Community in a large secondary school is a community of practice, in which all members continually work together to enhance student learning and build school culture. By leveraging Moodle’s ability to assign specific roles/permissions to each user and utilizing the Web 2.0 tools built into Moodle software, it has the potential to enable both communication and collaboration as well as distributed and democratic leadership. With adequate staff training and the support of servant leaders, Moodle can also play a vital role in building a learning community and even facilitating school reform.

In conducting this study the researcher examined the use of Moodle technologies and the strategies and structures utilized in an attempt to develop a learning community at Stelly’s Secondary School. Through a web-based questionnaire the 35 staff who participated in this study provided valuable feedback allowing the researcher to identify the strengths and weaknesses of using Moodle in this way.

After analysing the data collected the researcher identified three areas to be considered before the goal of using Moodle to develop a learning community can be realized. First, is a concerted effort to explore, evaluate and fine-tune the strategies and structures designed to enable communication and collaboration before they are implemented. Second is the delicate, but extremely important, task of staff training designed to encourage total buy-in. Third is the development of a simple but effective Moodle interface that will provide the users access to valuable information while not overwhelming them. Examples of strategies and structures that can be utilized to effectively mitigate some of the issues identified are also presented in this paper.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Overview of the Report

This report is comprised of five chapters and four appendices. The first chapter provides the introduction to the study, the purpose, the context, and some definitions of specific terms used in the study. Chapter Two reviews literature relevant to learning communities, Moodle technology, communication and, and leadership styles as the conceptual framework for the study is established. Chapter Three describes how the data collection instruments were developed and administered and how the data were analyzed. It also discusses the concern for ethics and control for bias. Chapter Four presents and discusses the findings while identifying the specific structures and strategies implemented in this study. The final chapter, Chapter Five, provides some recommendations on ways Moodle technology could be used to build a learning community in a large secondary school and gives some possible avenues for future research in order to confirm, clarify, extend, or refute the findings of this study.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if a Moodle website could aid in building a learning community in a large secondary school. This research attempted to identify unique strategies and structures of Moodle technology that enable staff to communicate and collaborate online. The research also examined the implementation of a Moodle website as a communication hub for staff in a large secondary school.

Research of this type is important because it explores the potential of using Moodle to help build a learning community through online communication. Building a learning community has become an important priority for schools, as they are understood

\[1\] The term Moodle is an acronym for Modular Object Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment. This term and others will be defined in more detail in the Definition of Terms section below.
to be central to creating a school culture focused on enhancing student learning. The study of this potential application will inform the field of school improvement and add to the knowledge of how learning communities operate at the school level.

**Objectives**
The objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine if a Moodle website can aid in building a learning community.

2. Explore both traditional and non-traditional uses of Moodle technology.

3. Examine the use of Web 2.0\(^2\) technologies (Wikis, Forums, Blogs and Social Networking Sites) in a large secondary school.

4. Identify Moodle structures and strategies that enable staff to communicate/collaborate effectively.

5. Identify areas of concern with respect to online communication and collaboration.

6. Identify areas of growth with respect to online communication and collaboration.

7. Identify challenges with respect to implementing new technology in a large secondary school.

Using these objectives research questions were formulated (see Appendix C for the complete Questionnaire employed in this study).

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\(^2\) Web 2.0, Wikis, Forums, Blogs and Social Networking Sites will be defined in the Definition of Terms section below.
Significance of the Study

Moodle has been used for several years now as an inexpensive, yet highly effective, tool for teachers to manage online courses. It has proven itself to be both easy to use and vastly expandable. Due to its open source code it is continuously being expanded and improved by a worldwide online community of programmers and can be adapted or modified to suit any organization’s specific needs. It also utilizes many of the Web 2.0 tools (Blogs, Forums, Wikis etc.) that enable multiple users to add content to the web from any computer with an Internet connection and a web browser.

With this ability comes enormous potential for Moodle to be used as much more than a course management system. It can provide a safe place for staff and students to participate in a social network that encourages thoughtful interaction and gives everyone a voice. In particular, it is the Moodle courses and forums that provide a password protected secure environment allowing each and every student the ability to voice their opinion simultaneously within private forums. As a result, Moodle is considered safe both in terms of the privacy it offers and the freedom each individual has to voice their personal opinion without judgment from the outside world. This research will provide important feedback about both building an online learning community and expanding the capabilities of Moodle beyond its original purpose as a course management system.

Context of the Study

This study was conducted with the support of the staff of Stelly’s Secondary School, located in Saanichton, BC, approximately twenty kilometers north of Victoria, BC. Stelly’s is a school of approximately 1153 students, with 3 administrators, 68 teachers and 46 support staff. As a school in the Saanich School District (SD#63), communication between all school and district employees primarily occurs through the district’s email system. Until recently, the Saanich School District used a First Class

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3 Open Source Software will be further defined in the Definition of Terms section below.
email system which provided a fully integrated suite of applications designed to enhance communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing. Email, instant messaging, calendaring, contacts, personal web publishing, online work spaces, file storage, and more were accessible through the FirstClass application on a user’s desktop (Solutions for Education, n.d.).

Due to a new district technology plan, which focuses on financial sustainability, a Zimbra email system was chosen to replace the existing First Class email system. The Zimbra Collaboration Suite is an enterprise-class open source email, calendar and collaboration server (About Zimbra, 2011) that will run on any standard web browser. This capability eliminates the need for proprietary operating systems and paves the way for free, open source software. With such a transition some collaboration tools were lost and others were gained. Moodle was introduced as a technology that could be adapted to compensate for some of the loss in functionality and expand the ability of Stelly’s Secondary School’s entire learning community to communicate online through the school’s Moodle website.

Effective communication is essential to building a learning community in which all members are engaged. Moodle technologies have the ability to give everyone a voice, something that is essential in democratic leadership. The challenge is to determine what kind of role, if any, Moodle can play in enabling effective communication and collaboration. Furthermore, what obstacles need to be overcome so that a learning community can be formed?

Benefits of the Study

For the staff at Stelly’s Secondary School there were several potential benefits to participating in the development of a learning community through Moodle technologies. On a personal level, participants may experience an increased ability to collaborate and communicate within their educational community. They may also grow more
comfortable with communicating in a web-based world while helping to establish an online learning community.

Establishing an online learning community may also benefit student learning. Teachers who are able to easily communicate and collaborate with both their colleagues and their students will most likely be more effective, which results in increased student learning. This ultimately benefits society and the state of knowledge in general.

Finally, using technology to accomplish these tasks would allow others, around the world, to utilize similar strategies and develop additional structures and techniques that help to build/expand a learning community.

Definition of Terms

The meanings of some of the terms used in this study may conflict with technical or legal definitions of the words. In order to mitigate the potential for misunderstanding the following definitions, as used in this study, are provided:

1. **Moodle** – (Modular Object-Orientated Dynamic Learning Environment)
   Created by Martin Dougiamas and developed by a very active open source community, Moodle is a popular Course Management System (CMS) that’s ideal for creating online learning communities and supplementing face-to-face learning. Universities, colleges, K-12 schools, businesses, and even individual instructors use to add web technology to their courses. (Cole & Foster, 2008, para. 1)

2. **Course Management System** – CMSs are web applications, meaning that they run on a server and are accessed by using a web browser from any location with an Internet connection. CMSs give educators tools to create a course web site and provide access control so only enrolled students can view it. They provide an easy way to upload and share materials, hold
online discussions and chats, give quizzes and surveys, gather and review assignments, and record grades. (Cole & Foster, 2008, p. 1)

3. Web 2.0 - is term that was introduced in 2004 and refers to the second generation of the World Wide Web. Web 2.0 technologies provide a level user interaction that was not available before. Websites have become much more dynamic and interconnected, producing "online communities" and making it even easier to share information on the Web. Examples of Web 2.0 features include social-networking sites, blogs, wikis, video-sharing sites, and web applications. (Web 2.0, 2008)

4. Forum – A web forum is a website or section of a website that allows visitors to communicate with each other by posting messages. When posting in a forum, you can create new topics (or "threads") or post replies within existing threads. (Web Forum, 2011)

5. Blog – Short for "Web Log," this term refers to a list of journal entries posted on a Web page. Some Web hosts have even created an interface where users can simply type a text entry and hit "publish" to publish their blog. (Blog, 2006)

6. Wiki – is a Web site that allows users to add and update content on the site using their own Web browser. This is made possible by Wiki software that runs on the Web server. Wikis end up being created mainly by a collaborative effort of the site visitors. A great example of a large wiki is the Wikipedia, a free encyclopedia in many languages that anyone can edit. The term "wiki" comes from the Hawaiian phrase, "wiki wiki," which means "super fast." (Wiki, 2006)

7. Social Networking Site– a web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (Boyd, 2008, p. 211)

8. Open Source Software - when a software program is open source, it means the program's source code is freely available to the public. Unlike
commercial software, open source programs can be modified and distributed by anyone and are often developed as a community rather than by a single organization. For this reason, the phrase "open source community" is commonly used to describe the developer of open source software development projects. (Open Source, 2008)

9. RSS – Stands for "RDF Site Summary," but is commonly referred to as "Really Simple Syndication." RSS is method of providing website content such as news stories or software updates in a standard XML format. Websites such as The Wall Street Journal and CNET's News.com provide news stories to various RSS directories that distribute them over the Internet. RSS content can be accessed with an RSS-enabled Web browser or other programs designed for retrieving RSS feeds. (RSS, 2006)

10. Moodle Administrator – for the purpose of this study a Moodle Administrator is an individual in charge of managing a Moodle website. This individual can do anything on the site, within all courses. They can even edit the source code of Moodle itself which allows them to modify the appearance and functionality of their particular Moodle website.

11. Moodle Block – contains a feature that loads in box on the right-hand or left hand side of a course’s home page. There are several types of standard Moodle blocks that can be added or removed from a Moodle page. Each Moodle course had display multiple blocks. (Blocks, n.d.)

12. Moodle Course Formats – Moodle provides a number of options for the general format of a course. The three most common formats include: the “Topics” format, in which sections are ordered conceptually by topic; the “Weekly” format, in which sections are ordered chronologically by week; and the “Social” format, in which a big forum is the central organizing principle. (Cole & Foster, 2008, p. 16)

13. Staff – For the purpose of this study the term “Staff” is used to describe the group of adults working within the educational community. This included Administrators, Teachers, Clerical Staff, Custodial Staff, Educational Assistants, Computer Technicians and all other Support Staff.
Currently, the concept of using Moodle technology to help establish a learning community in a large secondary school is one that has not been fully explored. In Chapter One, the purpose, significance, context and terms pertaining to this study were identified. In Chapter Two the focus will be on building the theoretical framework for the study by reviewing the relevant literature.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Review of the Literature

This chapter has been divided into four distinct sections based on the different themes that emerged. In reviewing the literature it became evident that the term “Learning Community” must be clearly defined for the purpose of this study. Consequently, the first section will focus on “Defining a Learning Community.” The second section, “Communication, Collaboration and Web 2.0,” focuses on the importance of communication and collaboration in building capacity in a school and the factors that come into play as educators attempt to move this process online. The third section addresses the question, “What is Moodle?” as it provides a brief history of the popular course management system and how it has been used. Finally, the fourth section examines the “Leadership Styles in a Moodle Enabled Learning Community,” which include Distributed Leadership, Democratic Leadership and Servant Leadership.

Throughout this chapter the conceptual framework of the research is established as it is derived from the literature reviewed. It will be argued that because modern Web 2.0 technologies, such as Moodle, enable educators to easily communicate and collaborate online, a learning community can be built with the help of democratic, distributed and servant leadership.

Defining a Learning Community

The term “Learning Community” has been used to describe a broad spectrum of ideals in education. Upon reviewing the relevant literature, there were three distinct definitions that emerged. These include the traditional description of a Learning Community, a Professional Learning Community and an Online Learning Community.

Let’s start with Peter Senge’s (1990) traditional definition of a learning community. He defines a learning community as,
A place where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly aspire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together. (as cited in Bottery, 2003, p. 189)

Similarly, Mitchell and Sackney’s (2006) definition also describes a group of people who have a shared focus on learning together. According to these authors, a learning community represents, “a group of people who take an active, reflective, collaborative, learning-orientated and growth-promoting approach toward the mysteries, problems, and perplexities of teaching and learning” (Mitchell and Sackney, 2006, p. 628).

Another position to consider when defining a learning community would be Wenger’s Community of Practice in which “learning occurs most effectively when the participants ‘engage in and contribute to the practices of their community’” (as cited in Grint, 2005, p. 115). Grint (2005) goes onto argue that “learning is best achieved both as an active and participatory practice and through social rather than an individual engagement with that practice” (p. 134). It is the social and participatory aspects of Wegner’s Community of Practice that are relevant to the learning community attempting to be established in this study.

Lastly, to conclude the traditional definition of a learning community it is important to consider what Watkins’ describes as the co-construction stance on learning in which knowledge is constructed socially rather than individually. According to Watkins (2005) “the co-construction stance moves us from viewing learning as an acquisition, whatever the commodity to be acquired, to view learning as also becoming part of a community” (p.17). This statement further emphasizes the importance of establishing a traditional learning community in a large secondary school.
As an extension of the traditional learning community, the term Professional Learning Community emerged in the 1990’s as a critical aspect for systematic reform (Halverson, 2006, p. 4). It is a term that focuses on the role of the educator as a member of a community, which has a shared vision around learning. According to Halverson (2006), “professional communities enable schools to engage in and act on a shared understanding of practice” (p. 4). He also argues that, “professional community is generated by networks of trust and obligation developed among teachers and school leaders around shared instructional practices” (Halverson, 2003, p. 2).

Like Halverson, Spillane and Louis acknowledge that a Professional Learning Community “can be viewed as a shorthand term for the kinds of adult relationships that can support individual change in classrooms across a whole school” (as cited in Cranston, 2009, p. 3).

Tool and Louise (2002) claim that the idea of a professional learning community integrates three mutually influencing concepts: a school culture that emphasizes professionalism, which is client-orientated and knowledge-based; one that emphasizes learning, placing high value on teachers’ inquiry and reflection; and, one that is communitarian, emphasizing personal connections. (as cited in Cranston, 2009, p. 3)

The Tool and Louis definition signifies an interest “not only in discrete acts of teacher sharing, but in the establishment of a school-wide culture that makes collaboration expected, inclusive, genuine, ongoing, and focused on critically examining practice to improve student outcomes” (as cited in Cranston, 2009, p. 3).

If a Professional Learning Community is established successfully, one can witness a culture that is grounded in collaboration, where teachers work together continuously to assess student strategies, assist each other in developing new methods and approaches to improve students’ achievement, discuss issues and
concerns openly, create a supportive environment conducive to achievement, and confer about their pedagogical approaches. (Elbousty & Bratt, 2010, p. 6)

Finally, the third definition that needs to be addressed pertains to an Online Learning Community. Most of the literature around this term assumes that students are learning online and the challenge is to build a community in which the relationships formed will help enhance learning. The term online community is used to describe a group of individuals interacting online but Havelock argues that this declaration of community does not confirm its existence (Havelock, 2004, p. 65).

Online communities (for professional development) may be using any form of electronic communication which provides for the opportunity for on-line synchronous/asynchronous two-way communication between an individual and their peers, and to which the individual has some commitment and professional involvement over a period of time. (as cited in Duncan-Howell, 2010, p. 326)

For the purpose of this study the term Learning Community is meant to describe a combination of the three definitions mentioned above. Therefore, in this study a Moodle Learning Community in a large secondary school is a community of practice\(^4\) in which all members continually work together to enhance student learning and build school culture through online communication and collaboration.

\textit{Communication, Collaboration and Web 2.0}

Communication and collaboration are key aspects to fostering a learning community, building capacity, and ultimately improving student learning. According to Stoll (2004) “strengthening community through collaboration is critical to capacity building in schools” (p. 9). Furthermore, Stoll (2004) argues that, “collaboration leads to greater change and improvement between voluntary professionals with a like-minded determination to improve” (p. 9).

\(^4\)“Community of Practice” is in reference to Wegner’s (1999) description of a Community of Practice.
This concept that strong communication and collaboration can lead to a successful learning environment is almost common sense. As Fullan (2006) points out, “people want to work together. Mutual attraction is high, interpersonal bonds are strong, and relationships are multifaceted because people take the time to know one another in a variety of settings” (p. 31). As a result, “dialogue, it is assumed, provides the opportunity for the development of tolerance, understanding and ultimately unity” (Jones, 2005, p. 57).

However, a learning community built on strong communication and collaboration must first establish trusting relationships. According to Byrk and Sneider (2003) “collective decision making with broad teacher buy-in, a crucial ingredient for reform, occurs more readily in schools with strong relational trust” (p.42). Furthermore, relationships provide the social capital that allows people to work together over time and exceed what any of them could accomplish alone (West-Burnham & Otero, 2011, p. 3).

Modern Web 2.0 technologies provide tools that enable all individuals to communicate and collaborate online by accessing any computer with a web browser and an internet connection. However, providing this capability does not ensure that communication and collaboration will actually occur. In some cases the lack of a trusting relationship with the school leader or the technology itself will inhibit communication and collaboration. In other cases an individual may simply not want to use Web 2.0 or Moodle Technology.

On the other hand, Timperley may argue that learning to communicate and collaborate online may be a good thing for those who struggle with or are resistant to new technology, as long as they are properly supported. According to Timperly (2008),

All learning activities require the twin elements of trust and challenge. Little professional learning takes place without challenge. Change, however, involves
risk; before teachers take on that risk, they need to trust that their honest efforts will be supported, not belittled. (p. 12)

Consequently, it may be possible to overcome the challenge of new technology by focusing on three key factors. The first factor to be considered is teacher pre-training. According to Hattie (2009), “the use of computers is more effective when there is teacher pre-training” (p. 223). The second factor to be considered is how the new technology relates to student outcomes. As Timperly (2008) points out, “collegial interaction that focused on student outcomes can help teachers integrate new learning into practice” (p. 15). Finally, the third factor to be considered is trust. This is a complicated issue when technology is involved, as it requires a trusting relationship with both the individuals helping to implement the technology in addition to the technology itself. At the same time, it may also be the most important factor since “relational trust is the connective tissue that binds individuals together to advance the education and welfare of students” (Byrk & Sneider, 2003, p.44).

What is Moodle?

Moodle is a Course Management System (CMS) created by Martin Dougiamas and designed by educators with pedagogical principles in mind. At the time of writing (April, 2011), Moodle was 8 years old and used by more than 32 million individuals in over 80 countries (Moodle Website, n.d.) It is essentially free software installed on a web server that enables teachers and students to share information and communicate online in a private or public setting within a virtual course.

Moodle software “facilitates online content creation and collaboration and entails various social and communication tools that support teacher-student, student-student, and teacher-teacher interactions” (Kok, 2008, p.87). Moodle also “has a broad variety of additional modular\(^5\) features and relatively quick learning curve, helping educators easily and effectively develop full online courses, either in advance or as the course is being

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\(^5\) Modular programming is a software design technique that increases the extent to which software is composed of separate, interchangeable components, called modules.
taught” (CoSN, 2008, p.1). It is important to note that although Moodle is considered “Free” by its “Open Source” designation, “that does not mean that there are no costs associated with that use. Support, maintenance, and training costs are a significant factor in the overall cost of any technology” (CoSN, 2008, p.5).

For a teacher there are several benefits to using a CMS like Moodle. If used well, a CMS can make one’s classes more effective and efficient. “It provides teachers with a simple-to-edit-and-update way to organize a class web page and communicate with colleagues” (Perkins & Pfaffman, 2006, p. 37). Furthermore, by moving some parts of a course online, the teacher can more effectively take advantage of scheduled face-to-face time to engage students’ questions and ideas (Cole & Foster, 2008). Finally, “the major benefits of Moodle realized by the teachers so far can be summarized as a collaborative online platform for teachers and students to learn together” (Kok, 2008, p. 95).

When Moodle is compared to other software that performs similar tasks, there are several fundamental differences that should be noted. “One of the main advantages of Moodle is that its underpinning pedagogy is social constructivism that supports role sharing and enables each participant to be a teacher as well as a learner” (Guohua & Bonk, 2007, p. 10). In addition, the underlying philosophy of Moodle is maximum instructor control and minimum administrator control (as cited in Kok, 2008, p.89).

As with any technological change it is important to note that in order for Moodle to be used successfully two criteria must be met. Firstly, teachers and students “must have adequate access to computers before requiring them to use Moodle” (CoSN, 2008, p. 8). Secondly, adequate training must also be provided. As stated previously, “the use of computers is more effective when there is teacher pre-training” (Hattie, 2009, p. 223).

Helen Gooch, the Instructional Technology Coordinator for Clarksville-Montgomery County School System, discovered one very practical approach to teacher pre-training. She successfully established “a Moodle distance learning system to support district professional development” (CoSN, 2008, p. 9). In 2008, all 200 new teachers in
Clarksville completed the new teacher orientation module online through Moodle. Gooch later discovered that “teachers who become familiar with course features—first by taking a course and then by facilitating a course—are best prepared to learn to author a course” (CoSN, 2008, p. 9).

Using Moodle as a teaching tool has become common practice in many universities and some high schools. “Moodle provides utilities to easily backup, exchange, and restore course components, some anticipate that Moodle’s growth in K-12 education could bring resource and course sharing by teachers as well” (CoSN, 2008, p.1). It allows students and teachers to interact online through forums, Wikis, blogs and several other Web 2.0 technologies. “Moodle has improved and enhanced student performance by promoting and organizing communication among parents, students, teachers, administrators, and the community” (Perkins & Pfaffman, 2006, P. 34).

So if Moodle allows users to easily share information, thoughts and opinions then it stands to reason that it has a great deal of potential beyond the online classroom scenario.

**Leadership Styles in a Moodle Enabled Learning Community**

This section will address three similar but distinct leadership styles enabled by Moodle technology. These include Distributed Leadership, Democratic Leadership and Servant Leadership.

Let’s start with Distributed (or Distributive) Leadership. According to Stoll (2004), “leadership can’t just be the domain of one person, or even a small group. It needs to be spread much more widely through schools as a collective enterprise, exercised on the basis of distributed authority and influence” (p. 4). Copeland (2003) even goes as far as to state that, “sharing the work of leadership in the context of whole school reform is viewed as a necessity” (p. 9). Hargreaves and Fink (2006) also propose that, “the consequences of not distributing leadership are staleness and stagnation” (p. 112).
Copeland (2003) suggests “the work for improving schools must be accomplished collectively by those at the school level” (p. 2). As such, there is a need for school communities to create and sustain broadly distributed leadership systems, processes and capacities (Copeland, 2003, p. 9). Longsworth and Panteli (2004) would argue that a supportive and enabling environment must first be provided before multiple leaders emerge from within the organization (p. 4).

Moodle can play an important role in helping to create a supportive and enabling environment that encourages distributed leadership. Moodle’s ability to assign specific roles to each individual provides “a huge amount of flexibility for managing how students and other people interact” (Cole & Foster, 2008, p. 49). In fact, “understanding roles and groups is one of the keys to unlocking Moodle’s full potential” (Cole & Foster, 2008, p. 49). By assigning specific roles and permissions to different individuals, multiple leaders can contribute to an online community without jeopardizing the security and stability of the virtual environment. It also means that all individuals, whether they are teachers, administrators, or support staff members, can play an important role in contributing to the overall learning community.

One common bi-product of Distributed Leadership is emergent leadership, which “comes from the staff in ways that are unanticipated and even surprising” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 122). In order for emergent leadership to occur a leader must first “create an inclusive, purposeful, and optimistic culture in which initiatives can easily come forward” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 123). However, it is important to recognize that if leaders “are not bound together by a clear vision, tight processes and clear accountability, multiple sources of leadership can pull a school apart” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 111). Furthermore, distributed leadership does not remove the need for “having ‘inspirational’ or ‘visionary’ leadership at the top of the organization” (Bolden et al., 2009, p. 266).
It has been argued that “successful e-learning team leadership is best facilitated within a ‘distributed-coordinated’ collaborative leadership approach” (as cited in Jameson et al., 2006, p. 964) and “guided distribution can create strong professional learning communities” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 121). However, there are also several potential downfalls to distributed leadership. For instance, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) state that, “the risks of distributing leadership are anarchy and confusion” (p. 112). Grint (2005) also warns that “distributed leadership cannot be reduced to ‘delegated leadership’, where unwanted tasks are handed down to others” (p. 142). “It may often be the case that administration and workload are devolved rather than power and authority” (Borden et al., 2009, p. 263). Consequently it is necessary to explore other styles of leadership, such as Democratic Leadership and Servant Leadership, in which the primary focus is on enabling individuals and giving them a voice.

According to Spillane (2005) “from a distributed perspective, leadership can be stretched over leaders in a school but is not necessarily democratic” (p. 149). So what is democratic leadership and how does Moodle enable it? In a participatory democracy “those who are directly affected by a decision have direct input into it” (Shields, 2009, p. 48). Unfortunately Shields (2009) also suggests that “educators themselves rarely have opportunities to practice participatory democracy, despite attempts to decentralize decision making” (p. 49). Forums in Moodle have the ability to give everyone, with access to a computer and the Internet, a voice. This ability ultimately has the potential to enable democratic dialogue. “Democratic dialogue is far more than an opportunity for the exchange of ideas, or gathering interesting information about other peoples lives. It is an explicitly political event because it attempts to shift the usual flow of power in order to un-marginalize the marginalized. Voices that are usually marginalized – which is to say silenced – are to be centered and therefore empowered” (Jones, 2005, p. 59). This does not, however, imply that power dynamics and hierarchies that exist in the larger school setting are completely absolved in the Moodle environment. Nevertheless, Moodle provides an alternate venue to give everyone in the school community a voice.
So how does democratic leadership differ from distributed leadership? “The notion of democratic leadership both draws upon and goes beyond that of distributed leadership” (Woods, 2004, p. 23). “As with distributed leadership, democratic leadership is a dispersed activity in which initiative circulates widely. It is not limited to the single leader” (Woods, 2004, p.7). However, “democracy adds to the emergent character of distributed leadership the notion that everyone, by virtue of their human status, should play a part in democratic agency – at times as a singular leader; more often through concertive agency which generates an additional dynamic through working together” (Woods, 2004, p. 12). Furthermore “democracy entails a depth and scope of ethical rationality that is not inherent to distributed leadership” (Woods, 2004, p 16). If Moodle technologies are used to their potential, leadership can be both distributed, in that multiple staff members can take on different leadership roles and responsibilities, and democratic in that online discussions can potentially level the playing field for staff who are at times reluctant to provide input. Due to the nature of Moodle forums democratic dialogue can be made to be transparent thus empowering those who may have been previously marginalized.

Unfortunately unless individuals are efficient with Moodle technology the hope of using it to promote distributed and democratic leadership will not be realized. As a result it becomes necessary to examine a third leadership style, Greenleaf’s notion of Servant Leadership, as one that could help individuals reach their potential and become contributing participants in a distributed and democratic learning community. According to Greenleaf (1977) “the servant leader is servant first. It begins with a natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead” (p. 27). “True leadership emerges from those whose primary motivation is a deep desire to help others” (Spears, 2004, p. 8). A Servant Leadership approach can be used continuously at multiple levels to help enable individuals within a learning community.

However, when we consider the concept of Servant Leadership it is important to recognize that servant leadership is not just helping people. “The servant-leader seeks to identify the will of a group and helps clarify that will” (Spears, 2004, p. 8). In addition,
“servant-leadership emphasizes increased service to others, a holistic approach to work, promoting a sense of community, and the sharing of power in decision making” (Spears, 2004, p. 8). Furthermore, there is a significant moral element and implied mentorship aspect to the concept of Servant Leadership. “Greenleaf explained servant leaders as developing followers into autonomous moral servants who continue to develop others into autonomous moral servants. In this way, servant leaders invite followers to become free and autonomous to follow their own conscience rather than the leader’s conscience” (as cited in Parolini, 2009, p. 278).

As a result, Servant Leadership is “different from distributed leadership because of the underlying primary motivation of the leader” (Cerit, 2009, p. 604).

Both servant and distributed leadership place emphasis on collaboration and role sharing or institutionalized means of working together. However, distributed leadership does not account for valuing people, helping people develop themselves and displaying authenticity components of servant leadership. Servant leadership has a leadership style that is more concerned about developing employees’ potential and facilitating their personal growth than distributed leadership. (Cerit, 2009, p. 604)

If Moodle is to be used to enable a learning community in a large secondary school then elements of each of the three styles of leadership discussed above must be utilized. Distributed leadership, which allows for the workload and responsibilities to be shared across many leaders, is not enough. Each member of the learning community must also feel as though they have a voice and their voice is being heard. Hence, it is critical to embrace Democratic Leadership for its ability to empower the individuals within the community. Finally, Servant Leadership will play a vital role in building capacity, encouraging new initiatives and ultimately realizing the full potential of the learning community.
In summary, the conceptual framework for this study is built on the notion that the community of practice in a large secondary school, in which all members continually work together to enhance student learning and build school culture, is enhanced by the use of Moodle. By leveraging Moodle’s roles/permissions and utilizing the Web 2.0 tools built into Moodle software, it has the potential to enable communication and collaboration as well as distributed and democratic leadership. With adequate staff training and the support of servant leaders, Moodle can also play a vital role in building a learning community and even facilitating school reform. Chapter Three will now explain the manner in which the research was conducted.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine if a Moodle Website could aid in building a learning community in a large secondary school. Consequently, this research attempted to identify unique strategies and structures of Moodle technology that enable staff to communicate and collaborate online. The research also examined the implementation of a Moodle website as a communication hub for staff in a large secondary school. This chapter contains the methods employed in this exploratory study including the sample of the population surveyed and the development of the data collection instrument. Ethical concerns and control for bias were also addressed. An explanation of how the data were analyzed concludes the chapter.

Data Collection

Population and the Sample

In total 117 staff at Stelly’s Secondary School were invited to participate in the study. Included in this sample were 67 teaching staff, 3 administrators, 6 clerical staff, 39 support staff and 2 district technology staff. The participants were chosen based on the fact that each of them had an account on Stelly’s Moodle website which was set up to allow them to add content to specific pages on the site. Each participant was able to add content, through forum posts, to the Daily News page, the Staff Room page and any course they created and/or managed. For example, the Athletic Director and Coaches at Stelly’s had the ability to edit the content displayed on the Athletics page of the website in addition to adding forum posts to the Daily News page and the Staff Room page.

The characteristics of the participants in the sample were female and male teachers, administrators and CUPE support staff at Stelly’s Secondary School. Two district technology staff members were also asked to participate in the study. The researcher is a teacher in the district and in no formal role of a power over relationship.

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6 CUPE stands for the Canadian Union of Public Employees. Non-teaching staff (Clerical, Custodial, Educational Assistants, Computer Technicians, etc.) are often referred to as CUPE staff.
Out of the 117 Stelly’s Secondary School Staff members invited to participate in the study, 35 individuals (approximately 30%) completed the web-based questionnaire.

Data Collection Instrument

The cross-sectional data were collected through a web-based questionnaire (Appendix C), hosted by surveymonkey.com (Survey Monkey). The researcher elected to use Survey Monkey as its web-based nature corresponded with the overall theme of the study. In addition, while Survey Monkey was extremely efficient in terms of collecting and analyzing large amounts of data, it did not pose any limitation with respect to how the survey questions were designed.

The goal of the researcher was to ensure the research questions were correctly addressed in the research instrument. The purpose and objectives used to develop the data collection instrument can be found in Chapter One. To accomplish this goal the web-based questionnaire consisted of nine questions that included matrices of Likert scale items, checklists, as well as areas for comments and inclusions.

The first four questions (Questions 1-4) attempted to profile the participants by determining their level of comfort, frequency of use, level of participation and level of competence with regard to Moodle and other web-based technologies. Each of the four questions in this section included a matrix of Likert-scale items as well as opportunities for participants to elaborate on their responses and provide further comments.

Questions 5, 7 and 8 focused on the topics of communication and collaboration with a goal of answering the primary research question of whether Moodle could be used to enable a learning community. Each of the three questions posed around this topic included Likert-scale items as well as opportunities for participants to elaborate on their responses and provide further comments.

Finally questions 6 and 9 attempted to determine areas of further study and/or interest in the topic. They were also directed at determining other areas of study, both in
terms of potential applications of Moodle technology and in terms of other technologies that could be used to aid the building of a learning community in a large secondary school. Question 6 included a matrix of Likert-scale items whereas question 9 simply provided an opportunity for participants to give feedback.

Concern for Ethics

Program assessment is part of the routine activities of teachers and therefore does not go beyond their normal and everyday work activity. The following section outlines the process by which the data was collected and the concern for ethics that was taken.

On January 20, 2010 an application to the Human Research Ethics Board at the University Victoria was completed by the researcher, approved for submission by the graduate supervisor, and submitted to the Human Research Ethics Board. The researcher received the Certificate of Approval on April 7, 2010 (Appendix A).

On April 22, 2010, Heather Gross, the District Executive Assistant to the Office of the Superintendent of Schools in SD #63 gave the researcher permission to conduct the survey at Stelly’s Secondary School (Appendix A). Immediately thereafter, in a Stelly’s Secondary School staff meeting on April 23, 2010, the researcher presented the study to the potential participants. In this presentation participants were fully informed as to the purpose and scope of the assessment that would be conducted within the school. The researcher explicitly stated that their participation would be voluntary and that by completing the web-based questionnaire they would be giving implied consent to participate in the study (Appendix B). It was stated that their answers would be confidential and that the information collected would be for the researcher’s use in the preparation of the research paper only. The researcher also deemed it necessary to explain that due to the anonymous nature of the web-based questionnaire it would be impossible to remove their information once the survey had been submitted. The researcher went on to state that if the participants found any questions intrusive they may choose not to answer those questions. Finally, the participants were told that School
District #63 (Saanich) and the University of Victoria Ethics Board had both granted their permission for this study to go forward.

On April 28, 2010 the whole population of 117 staff members at Stelly’s Secondary School were officially invited to participate in the study. Participants were invited through an e-mail of recruitment (Appendix B) that contained a Letter of Information and information about Implied Consent. Survey Monkey was used to send out the e-mail of recruitment and all participants were contacted through their SD #63 e-mail address as listed on the internal district e-mail system.

The e-mail or recruitment (Appendix B) explained how to complete the web-based questionnaire and contained a unique link to access it. It also contained a copy of the survey questions (Appendix C) so that individuals could preview the survey. Participants who choose to complete the survey did so by clicking on their unique link. The survey could only be completed once through each unique link. As mentioned previously, it was explicitly stated both in the researchers presentation at the Staff Meeting on April 23, 2010 and the email of recruitment on April 28, 2010 that submission of the web-based questionnaire was the participant’s implied consent to participate in the study.

The results from each survey were stored on the researcher’s Survey Monkey account but the participants’ e-mail addresses were not stored with their data. As a result, the researcher could not match individuals with their responses. It should be noted that since Survey Monkey is based in the United States, collected information is subject to the Patriot Act; however, the researcher was not be able to access the identities of the individual participants. After the data was collected, the researcher could access the results using a unique user name and password. Once the study was completed the survey data was deleted from the researcher’s Survey Monkey account.
Self-Location and a Note on Bias

Most researchers study subjects about which they are passionate, and this is certainly the case for this study. All researchers’ prior knowledge and experiences affect the questions they choose to ask, the problems they choose to investigate, and the lens through which they interpret the results. For this reason, the biases with which any researcher enters a study are unavoidable; however, it is becoming increasingly expected that researchers attempt to identify and account for some of the prior knowledge and experiences that have shaped the study design. As such, in this section the researcher has chosen to disclose some of his starting assumptions about Moodle. It is hoped that doing so will give readers a greater sense of transparency before they read the results presented in Chapter Four.

The researcher is a teacher at Stelly’s Secondary School who is responsible for the school’s website. In addition, the researcher has invested a substantial amount of time into developing a new Moodle based website for Stelly’s Secondary School and, as a result of this extended exposure, believes Moodle can be used to develop a learning community in a large secondary school. The researcher also believes that Moodle technologies can enable staff communication and collaboration allowing a Moodle website to become the primary communication hub for Stelly’s Secondary School. The researcher believes that this insider experience has allowed for greater insight into the research problem. Nevertheless, he is aware that this background experience may affect readers’ perceptions regarding the effectiveness of Moodle technologies and the strategies used in this research. Every effort was made by the researcher to remain objective and impartial during the course of the study. The theoretical schema held by the researcher was put aside in hopes of uncovering an empirically based answer to the research problem. As readers will see in Chapter Four, dissenting opinions about Moodle were included as well, not just options that supported the researcher’s starting position.
Data Analysis

The web-based questionnaire used as the data collection instrument allowed for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. Chapter Four contains several figures, which illustrate the quantitative data. Reference is also made to some enlightening comments provided by the participants. While the highlights and data pertinent to this study are included in Chapter Four, for the sake of further transparency, all of the data collected can be found in Appendix D.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine if Moodle could be used to help develop a learning community in a large secondary school. By examining participants’ use of specific structures integrated into Stelly’s Secondary School’s Website, through Moodle technology, it was hoped the researcher would be able to suggest technological strategies that could be effective in developing a learning community. As discussed in Chapter Three the data were collected through a web-based questionnaire (Appendix C). The four central aims of the web-based questionnaire were to:

1. Determine if a Moodle Website could aid in building a learning community in a large secondary school.
2. Identify specific strategies and structures of Moodle technology that would enable staff to communicate/collaborate online.
3. Determine if a Moodle website could be used as a communication hub for staff in a large secondary school.
4. Identify areas of concern, areas of growth, and challenges that come with implementing Moodle technology as a method of staff communication and collaboration.

This chapter will report on the findings derived from the research in five sections. The first section delineates the participant response rates. The second section presents the specific structures and strategies that were utilized to develop online communication and collaboration. Section three discusses the relevant findings regarding the purpose of the study, to determine if a Moodle Website could aid in building a learning community in a large secondary school. This section also presents the researcher’s findings in regard to the effectiveness of the specific strategies and structures implemented. In the fourth section the researcher explores the concept of a Moodle website as a communication hub for staff in a large secondary school. Finally, section five concludes the chapter with a discussion regarding the participants reported abilities, areas of concern, areas of potential growth, and other challenges that were exposed during the study. The data are
reported using figures and comments from open ended questions. All of the data collected for this study can be found in Appendix D.

Response Rates

As stated in chapter three, on April 28, 2010 a sample of 117 staff at Stelly’s Secondary School were officially invited, through an e-mail of recruitment, to participate in the study. On May 11, 2010 a second and final e-mail of recruitment was sent to the staff at Stelly’s Secondary School in an attempt to recruit those who may have overlooked or forgotten about the initial email. In total 35 of the 117 individuals attempted the survey, however, some of the participants chose to skip one or more question which resulted in some of the questions having as few as 30 responses recorded. While the researcher cannot speculate as to why certain people chose not to participate in the study or answer certain questions, readers should note that the following lessons learned present findings from a self-selected group, and likely do not include the views of people who are already not big e-mail users (and therefore missed the call to participate). As a result, the researcher is not claiming that these findings can or should be generalized to the whole Stelly’s community. Rather, this chapter provides a point of entry into further discussions and further areas of research for using Moodle technologies.

Introducing the Strategies and Structures Implemented

Courses and Pages

It should be noted that many of the pages on Stelly’s Moodle Website are actually Moodle courses. For example the “Athletics” page is actually a Moodle course named “Athletics”. For those who manage Moodle websites this is an important distinction, as you cannot set up a forum or add an activity to a Moodle page but you can within a Moodle course. For the purpose of this paper however, the terms “course” and “page” are meant to by synonymous as many of the courses on Stelly’s Moodle Website act as pages as far as the user is concerned.
Forums and RSS\(^7\) Feeds

Stelly’s Moodle Website utilizes a number of forums that produce RSS feeds to enable both collaboration and communication. When a forum is set up within a course, members of that course can easily add new posts or reply to a post that someone else has made. In Moodle, creating a new post or replying to a post is as simple as writing an email. Moodle forums also have the ability to produce an RSS feed. This capability means that every time a new post is made to a forum, individuals who subscribe to this forum through the RSS feed will receive the new post via their RSS reader.

RSS is how Stelly’s Moodle website transfers information from one course/page to another. When a Moodle course is created one of the modules/blocks that can be added to the course is an “RSS Block”. An “RSS Block” retrieves the information from an RSS feed and displays it in a block on the side of the page. Since Moodle forums can be set to produce an RSS feed and an “RSS Block” can be added to a Moodle course to display RSS feeds, posts to a forum within one course can be pushed or forwarded to other courses. For example, if a staff member posts an announcement about an upcoming game in the “Athletics” forum located on the “Daily News” page, this information will also appear on the “Athletics” page through the “RSS block” on that page.

The Daily News Page

The Daily News page is a course on Stelly’s Moodle Website that hosts forums which enable staff at Stelly’s Secondary School to easily add announcements to the website. In total this course/page hosts nine different forums: General Announcements; Athletics; Clubs; Grads; Scholarships; Career Center; The Arts; Parents; and District Info. Every staff member at Stelly’s is enrolled in this course and has the ability to both post announcements and subscribe by email to each of the above mentioned forums. All Students at Stelly’s are also enrolled in this course and have the ability to subscribe by email to any of the forums they choose. Parents are not enrolled in this course, as they do not have Moodle accounts, but through a special module they can choose to subscribe to

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\(^7\) RSS is defined in Chapter One.
these forums by email. As each of the forums on this page also produce an RSS feed, anyone can subscribe through the RSS feed as well.

The concept behind the Daily News page was that since all staff would be able to share and access general information easily, this may result in better communication within the learning community at Stelly’s Secondary School.

*Daily Announcements Power-Point*

In order to create a more visually appealing way to present the information on the Daily News Page, a Power-Point was created each day by a staff member and posted to the Daily Announcements Power-Point forum on the main page of Stelly’s Website for everyone to download. The Daily Announcements Power-Point summarized, in point form, the information staff posted to the Daily News Page. Staff members, who had an LCD projector in their classroom, could download this Power-Point and show it to their students.

*The Staff Room Page*

The Staff Room page is actually a private Moodle course, meaning that only staff members at Stelly’s Secondary School have permission to access this page. It was created to enable staff communication and collaboration through Moodle forums, Wikis, shared resource folders, and other Web 2.0 features.

The concept behind the digital “Staff Room” was to provide staff a private online space that could both host important documents and information as well as allow for online discussions. Basically everything you would find in a regular office/staff room, both documents and conversations, could be put online for all staff to access and contribute to.

*Front Page Stories*

Front Page Stories were published to a forum displayed on Stelly’s main Moodle page. The concept behind this forum was to provide a place where staff could share
Enabling a Learning Community with Moodle

This section will attempt to interpret the relevant findings regarding the purpose of the study, to determine if a Moodle Website could aid in building a learning community in a large secondary school. In Chapter Two a Moodle Learning Community was defined as a community of practice in which all members continually work together to enhance student learning and build school culture through online communication and collaboration. As communication and collaboration are essential to building a learning community let’s start by looking at the data collected that addresses this topic.

![Moodle Technologies Enable Online Communication and Collaboration](image)

Figure 4.1 Moodle technologies enable online communication and collaboration

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8 “Community of Practice” is in reference to Wegner’s (1998) description of a Community of Practice.
In analyzing the data collected on whether Moodle technologies enable online communication 28 participants (87.5%) out of the 32 who responded indicated that they either “somewhat agree” (37.5%) or “strongly agree” (50%) with the statement that Moodle technologies enable online communication. When it came to online collaboration the number of participants who agreed that Moodle Technologies enable online collaboration was slightly lower with 23 participants (74.2%) out of 31 responding choosing either “somewhat agree” (45.2%) or “strongly agree” (29%). According to one of the participants, “Moodle technologies enhance the process of communication by allowing all individuals to post comments/thoughts/announcements in a timely and obvious fashion for all to see and or discuss within the online community.”

According to the data collected the majority of the participants felt that Moodle technologies did in fact enable both online communication and, to a lesser degree, online collaboration. However, several of the comments made in response to this question indicated dissatisfaction with using Moodle to communicate and/or collaborate. Three of the comments referenced the concept as a whole with statements like, “if you want me to know something just send me an email”, “I don’t spend any more time then I have to online” and “I feel collaboration is best done face to face.” Other comments pertained to the Moodle environment itself. For example, one participant commented that they “find Moodle to be a very unfriendly environment primarily because the user interface is poorly designed” while another stated that “because of the time it takes to access, and discern what matters, I access it very seldom for informational purposes.” Finally, of the ten comments made in response to this question, six of them made reference to the necessity of total staff buy-in and a need for further staff training with statements like, “I think not enough people are comfortable with this yet” and “the usefulness of the site depends on the regularity of people checking in and responding”. 
Figure 4.2 Effectiveness of Moodle structures used in building a learning community at Stelly’s Secondary School

Figure 4.2 displays the data related to the specific structures and strategies implemented as an attempt to build a learning community. In terms of building school culture and general awareness the data indicates that both the “Front Page Stories” and the “Daily Announcements Power-Point” were effective at accomplishing this task. Out of the 30 participants who responded to this question 27 (90%) found the “Front Page Stories” either “somewhat effective” (36.7%) or “very effective” (53.3%) in building a learning community. With respect to the “Daily Announcements Power-Point” 24 (80%) of the participants found them either “somewhat effective” (40%) or “very effective” (40%). Several comments such as “the daily announcements have been excellent: total interconnectedness within our school” and “the front page stories are immeasurable in terms of their effect because they are lasting success stories that are visible to all in our community (if not the world),” provided further evidence that these two strategies were
effective. It should be noted that there were several comments from participants stating that they wanted to use the “Daily Announcements Power-Point” but the lack of a “mounted LCD projector” in their classroom prevented them from doing so.

The “Staff Room Page” was the next most effective structure implemented with 26 (86.7%) of the 30 participants indicating that it was either “somewhat effective” (56.7%) or “very effective” (30%) in building a learning community. In analyzing the participant comments with respect to “The Staff Room”, several participants indicated that “it is a good start and demonstrates that the goal of an online community is a good one” however, the “lack of staff knowledge, apprehension and willingness to use technology” combined with the “lack of staff buy-in” are limiting factors in its overall effectiveness.

In terms of the data related to the participants’ abilities to “add their own announcements” 23 (76.7%) out of the 30 participants indicated that this strategy was either “somewhat effective” (50%) or “very effective” (26.7%) in building a learning community. Similarly, the data related to the participants ability to “edit specific sections of the website” showed that 20 (66.7%) of the 30 participants indicated that this strategy was either “somewhat effective” (50%) or “very effective” (16.7%) in building a learning community. The ability of all participants to add content to Stelly’s Moodle Website was not a specific strategy that some of the staff utilized and therefore may not have been recognized as having much of an effect in terms of building a learning community. However, this ability is what forms the backbone of the Stelly’s Moodle Website and is what enables many of the other structures to function. For example, the “Daily Announcements Power-Point” would not have been updated in such a timely manner if staff were not able to add their announcements at any time of day via the website.

Moodle as a Communication Hub

This section will attempt to interpret the relevant findings with respect to using Moodle as a communication hub in a large secondary school. In interpreting the data
related to this topic it is important to reflect on the data already analyzed while also considering the participants’ self-reported use of Stelly’s Moodle Website. Figures 4.3 and 4.4 below attempt to show pages participants most commonly visited and contributed to.

Figure 4.3 Number of times per week participants visit Stelly’s Moodle Website (http://stellys.sd63.bc.ca)
Due to the relatively low response rate of 30% (35 out of 117 participants) the researcher is hesitant to place too much value on the data collected in this area. The fact that some participants are required to contribute to pages on Stelly’s Moodle Website, due to their job descriptions, could easily skew the data if they were the participants who primarily responded to the questionnaire. There is an obvious difference, however, between the number of times per week participants visited pages on Stelly’s Moodle Website (Figure 4.3) compared to the number of times per week participants contributed to pages on Stelly’s Moodle Website (Figure 4.4). This may suggest that participants are using Stelly’s Moodle Website to access information but not inclined to, or capable of, using it as a means of communicating and/or collaborating.
Another issue with the data collected in this area has to do with the Likert-scale items presented. Participants were required to select an item based on the number of times they either visited or contributed to the different pages on Stelly’s Moodle Website each week. What remains to be answered, though, is how many times per week does a participant need to access pages on Stelly’s Moodle Website for the website to be considered a communication hub? The answer to this question is extremely subjective and therefore it is impossible for the researcher to make any conclusions using the data collected. The questions that produced Figures 4.3 and 4.4 were successful in determining which pages on Stelly’s Moodle website were viewed and modified most often by staff, however they failed to answer the question as to whether or not a Moodle website could be used as a communication hub. A better question would have been to simply ask participants whether or not they believe Stelly’s Moodle Website acted effectively as a communication hub for a large secondary school?

Abilities, Concerns, Growth and Challenges

This section will attempt to interpret the relevant findings with respect to the abilities of the participants, areas of concern, areas of potential growth, and challenges that need to be overcome. Let’s start by considering the data collected that pertains to the participant’s ability to use Web 2.0 technologies and Stelly’s Moodle Website.
Figure 4.5 Participants comfort with Web 2.0 technologies

Figure 4.5 gives us a good idea of the overall ability, and level of comfort with respect to technology, of the participants in this study. In focusing on the data related to the participant’s ability to use Moodle forums, the data shows that although 30 (88.2%) of the 34 participants who responded to this question indicated that they either “understand” or “use” Moodle Forums, only 13 (38.2%) participants indicated that they actually “use” this technology. Furthermore, 4 (11.8%) participants indicated that they were “unfamiliar” with this technology. These numbers concur the results shown in Figure 4.6 with respect to participant’s self-rated ability to use Stelly’s Moodle Website. Figure 4.6 shows that 14 (45.2%) of the 31 participants who responded to this question reported that they were either “minimally meeting” or “not meeting” expectations with regard to adding announcements to Stelly’s Moodle website. If you were to then factor in the 5 (16.1%) participants who responded with “N/A” to this same question, only 12 (38.7%) of the participants reported to be “meeting” or “exceeding” expectations with
With respect to adding announcements to Stelly’s Moodle Website. When analyzing the data pertaining to participants self reported ability to “add a forum post to the staff room page” the results were very similar showing that only 13 (42%) of the 31 who responded felt that their abilities were either “meeting” or “exceeding” expectations. These results indicate that a number of staff may not have been able to contribute to the learning community at Stelly’s because they were not yet proficient with Moodle technology.

![Self-Rating on Ability to use Stelly’s Moodle Website](http://stellys.sd63.bc.ca)

Figure 4.6 Self-rating on ability to use Stelly’s Moodle Website (http://stellys.sd63.bc.ca)

In analyzing data related to future professional development topics and how technology could be used to help build a learning community, participant responses identified several areas of potential growth. Although the data was somewhat inconclusive, due to the sample size, it appears that there is a need for further staff training in all aspects of using Moodle Technology. Even in regards to the most basic task of “logging in”, 5 (16.2%) of the 31 participants responded with a “yes” (9.7%) or a
“maybe” (6.5%) when asked if they were interested in further professional development on this topic. With respect to using Moodle Forums 14 (45.2%) of the 31 participants responded with a “yes” (19.4%) or a “maybe” (25.8%) when asked if they were interested in further professional development on this topic. This data reflects that was observed in analyzing the data related to the participant’s comfort level and ability to use Moodle forums.

![Figure 4.7 Interest in Moodle professional development topics](image)

Figure 4.7 Interest in Moodle professional development topics

In analyzing some of the open-ended responses and feedback pertaining to the question of how Moodle, and technology in general, could be used to help build a learning community in a large secondary school, many participants chose to identify obstacles rather than solutions. The first theme/obstacle identified was the state of technology in most secondary schools. According to one participant “the biggest issue in terms of technology for us and students is money. Secondary schools will always be years behind students in terms of technology. We just can’t afford to be current…at least
not for a school as a whole.” The second obstacle/theme identified was the need for more “professional development and hands on training about Moodle”. Finally, the third obstacle/theme pertained to the concept of staff buy-in. As one participant stated, “we have to learn to navigate the troubled path of moving people forward. This is a wonderful tool and we need to use it as effectively as we can.”

Figure 4.8 Importance of a learning community

According to Figure 4.8 the participants in this study felt that building a learning community is an important goal, worthy of pursuing. However, it remains to be determined as to whether or not Moodle can help build a learning community in a large secondary school. Chapter Five will attempt to answer this question while providing recommendations based on the data collected and the literature reviewed.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Using Moodle to Develop a Learning Community

Moodle has a great deal of potential with respect to enabling online communication and collaboration. As previously stated by Kok (2008), “one of the main advantages of Moodle is that its underpinning pedagogy is social constructivism that supports role sharing and enables each participant to be a teacher as well as a learner” (p. 89). However, building a learning community with Moodle involves much more than simply providing community members with the ability to add content to a website. This study examined several of the strategies and structures utilized at Stelly’s Secondary School in an attempt to develop a learning community through a Moodle website. The participants of the study completed an online questionnaire from which the researcher was able to make the following conclusions and recommendations.

Based on the data collected and the literature reviewed it is still the researcher’s opinion that Moodle can be used to help develop a learning community in a large secondary school. However, simply installing Moodle and expecting staff to jump on board is not realistic as “trust is a precondition for developing professional learning communities” (as cited in Kaser & Halbert, 2009, p. 44). When implementing new technology, a trusting relationship must exist between both the staff members and the person(s) implementing the technology, as well as between the staff members and the technology itself.

As an attempt to ensure trusting relationships prevail, the researcher has identified three areas that need to be considered before the goal of using Moodle to develop a learning community can be realized. First, is a concerted effort to explore, evaluate and fine-tune the strategies and structures designed to enable communication and collaboration before these structures are implemented. If they are evaluated in a participatory and democratic way, by all members of the community, they will perhaps stand a greater chance of sustainable success. Second, is the delicate, but extremely important, task of staff training designed to encourage total buy-in. Third is the
development of a simple but effective Moodle interface that will provide the user access to valuable information while not overwhelming them.

Structures and Strategies

Moodle’s modular format and use of Web 2.0 technologies allows for an ever expanding list of possibilities when it comes to developing strategies and structures that could be used to enable a learning community. Some of the strategies and structures implemented in this study are discussed below.

*The Staff Room Page*

As more institutions attempt to eliminate paper and digitize everything, email is not always the best option when communicating important information. Staff members should to be able to easily access pertinent, up to date information in a timely manner, without having to sort through hundreds of email messages. A private webpage, if managed well, can be used to fill this void. A private Moodle course also satisfies this need, while at the same time providing additional tools that enable online communication and collaboration. If staff members are trained to use the Web 2.0 tools available to them in Moodle, like forums and Wikis, everyone can have a voice and participate in important discussions.

In this study, many of the staff members at Stelly’s Secondary School believed the concept of the “Staff Room Page” to be sound, however due to the lack of training available, a new and “unfriendly” user interface, and the disinclination of some staff to adopt the concept, the “Staff Room” page was used as more of a repository for important documents and information than it was as a medium for collaboration.

*Front Page Stories*

In years gone by school paper newsletters have played a very important role in establishing pride and building culture within a school; however, they are quickly
becoming a thing of the past. Now, when people search for information they search online and expect to find it within a few clicks. Educators need to be cognizant of the face they put on for the public. Habitually celebrating success in a public forum can build pride and even help establish the culture of a school. This is especially important in a large secondary school where it is difficult to establish relationships between every member of the learning community.

In this study, the “Front Page Stories” published to the main page of Stelly’s Moodle Website were deemed to be an effective strategy with respect to developing a learning community in a large secondary school. These stories were praised for the information they provided as well as their long lasting effect on public perception.

Forums and RSS Feeds

Forums are truly one of Moodle’s strengths. By utilizing Moodle forums, that produce RSS feeds, a Moodle website can be structured in such a way that centralizes important information and eliminates redundancy. Moodle forums also provided a more simplified user interface for staff.

In this study the “Daily News Page” was one of the structures that exploited the simplicity of Moodle forums and the RSS feeds they produced. By hosting multiple announcement forums within one Moodle course, staff members could simply add their announcement to the appropriate Moodle forum, which would then push the information onto the pertinent pages and people through RSS feeds and forum subscriptions. The data collected indicated that this was an effective strategy in helping to build a learning community within a large secondary school.

Staff Training and Buy-In

Trust and Technology

According to Schneider and Bryk (2003) strong relational trust “makes it more likely that reform initiatives will diffuse broadly across the school because trust reduces
the sense of risk associated with change” (p. 43). Furthermore, “the importance of trust in effective performance of virtual teams is the singularly most agreed on constant in the study of effective leadership of virtual teams” (Longsworth & Panteli, 2010, p.6). Subsequently, trust is an essential ingredient to the successful implementation of any new technology. If the technology does not work as expected the user will lose confidence in both the technology and themselves. They will also lose interest in reaching the overall goal. Once lost, trust is extremely difficult to regain.

Many of the challenges identified in this study were a direct result of the frustration some staff experienced when attempting to use Moodle. These frustrations were primarily experienced on three levels. The first was with respect to the hardware and software participants were using to access Stelly’s Moodle Website. At the time of this study many of the computers at Stelly’s Secondary School were extremely out-dated and used versions of Microsoft Explorer, not supported by Moodle, as their primary web browser. As a result the user interface did not always work as it was designed to or as it was expected to. Secondly, at the time of this study the text editor used by most staff at Stelly’s Secondary School was an older version of Microsoft Word. This caused some formatting issues, which were not easily fixable, when staff attempted to copy text and tables they created in Microsoft Word and paste them into the Moodle HTML editor. Finally, the third major difficulty staff were experiencing was with respect to the use of images within Moodle. At the time of this study, in order to insert an image onto a Moodle page or into a forum post the user needed to understand theoretical web design concepts around image file size restrictions. Understandably, these concepts were foreign to many of the staff at Stelly’s Secondary School. As Moodle software is being continually improved it is the researcher’s hope that these issues will soon be resolved so that Moodle’s full potential can be realized.

Staff Training

A key factor in establishing trust when implementing new technology is the Staff Training Program that supports it. Havelock (2004) suggests that a key component to successfully integrating new technology into a school is “dedicated time during a
community project’s initial phases to developing and supporting technological competence” (p. 74). Unfortunately, at the time of this study there was not an opportunity for the entire staff at Stelly’s Secondary School to be trained and coached through how to effectively use the Moodle structures and strategies implemented. As a result, those who were comfortable with technology and/or expressed an interest in learning about Moodle were able to adapt to the changes while others were left behind.

It is recommended that in future implementation of Moodle technology all staff receive adequate training in order to increase staff buy-in. After such training, individuals would still be able to choose not to buy-in as part of their democratic right; however, at least they would be making an educated choice. In terms of training, a possible approach would be to have staff members take an introductory training session in person and then have them enrol in an online Moodle Training Course, similar to the one Helen Gooch implemented in Clarksville. Gooch concluded that teachers who first enrolled and participated in a Moodle course were better prepared to manage their own Moodle course (CoSN, 2008, p. 9). After all, the best way to learn what Moodle is capable of may be by actually participating as a student in a Moodle course. Once all staff members receive the same basic training a community of practice could be developed to help supplement and expand the professional learning opportunities. According to Havelock (2004) the concept of a community of practice provides “novices access to roles that allow them to grow in their understanding and become members of the community” (p. 59).

Leadership

When it comes to Moodle technology, leadership can be said to exist on three levels. The first level pertains to Moodle’s ability to distribute leadership responsibilities. “At their best, professional learning communities embody the most positive features of distributed leadership, bringing the energy and ability for the whole community forward to serve the best interests of all students” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 128). As discussed in Chapter Two, by modifying an individual’s role and/or permissions in Moodle, he/she can take on a variety of leadership responsibilities within the online learning community. This ability not only allows multiple leaders to share the
responsibility for certain tasks, it also paves the way for emergent leadership as individuals can choose their level of involvement. In this study, Moodle was successfully used to both distribute routine leadership responsibilities across staff and facilitate unique initiatives that emerged.

On a second level, Moodle technology can be used to promote democratic leadership. For example, each staff member at Stelly’s Secondary School had the ability to participate in private online discussions through the forums on Stelly’s “Staff Room Page.” As everyone on staff was a member of the “Staff Room Page” it was thought that everyone would be given an equal voice in the discussions that took place. However, due to the lack of staff training and insufficient staff buy-in the expected and hoped-for result was not realized. Instead, some staff members may have been left out of the discussion due to the fact that they did not access the forums on the “Staff Room Page”.

Finally, on a third level is the role of the Moodle Administrator as a servant leader. According to Greenleaf, “one has to first serve society and through one’s service a person will be recognized as a leader” (as cited in Crippen, 2005, para. 7). To encourage staff buy-in Moodle Administrators must think of themselves as servants to the staff members’ needs and desires. They must be able to identify what an individual wants to accomplish and help them bring their dream to fruition. In this study the Moodle Administrator played the role of a servant leader by acting as both a coach and a facilitator in the training and support of staff. Unfortunately, not all staff could be supported in this way, which is why a more structured staff training program has been recommended.

On a final note about leadership it is important to acknowledge that distributed leadership does not remove the need for “having ‘inspirational’ or ‘visionary’ leadership at the top of the organization” (Borden et al., 2009, p. 266). This is especially true when it comes to aspects such as the user interface in Moodle, as will be elaborated upon below.
Improving the User Interface

Some of the concerns brought up in this study were related to the user interface within Moodle. Consequently the researcher would like to recommend three strategies that could be used to help improve the user’s experience without relying on the Moodle development team to improve the core structures.

**Custom Menus**

One way of helping to improve the user interface is to create custom menus within Moodle. Currently when a new forum is created in Moodle it appears within one of the sections in the course. If multiple forums and activities exist within a specific course it can become cluttered and somewhat overwhelming for users. By creating a custom menu as shown in Figure 5.1, personalized links can be made to important folders, forums or documents on the page. This can greatly improve the user’s experience.

![Figure 5.1](image-url)

Figure 5.1 The “Quick Links” menu on Stelly’s Secondary School’s “Staff Room Page” is a custom menu with links to forums, folders and other Moodle resources/activities available within the Staff Room Moodle course.
Simplified Pages and Course Formats

Due to Moodle’s modular design a variety of course formats can be installed and made available to staff. Choosing the correct format for a course can greatly influence the user’s experience. For example, if the primary purpose of a course is to encourage online discussions then a “Social” format should be used to ensure the discussions are immediately visible to users visiting that particular course/page. The typical formats used in Moodle include the “Topics”, “Weekly” or “Social” formats. These formats satisfy most users needs in terms of managing online courses, however, other course formats need to be explored to address some of the concerns identified in this study. Keeping in mind that the ultimate goal is to create a friendly user interface that displays only the most pertinent information, the course formats recommended by the researcher would be the “Social Format with Header” and the “Noticeboard Format”. Both of these formats provide a great combination of simplicity and functionality.

Once the correct format for a course has been chosen, adding or removing “blocks” can help customize it. To address the concerns identified in this study, courses/pages should be designed to be both visually appealing and simple. There are literally hundreds of “blocks” that can easily be added or removed from a course in Moodle. When building a website intended to be all-inclusive and help facilitate the development of a learning community, one must resist the temptation to add too many “blocks” in order to try and increase the functionality of a particular course/page. The more functionality and “blocks” each course/page has the more confusing it becomes for the novice user.

Custom Themes

Due to the fact that Moodle software is considered to be open source, custom themes can be developed to improve the functionality and overall appearance of the user interface. A Moodle Administrator can choose to download and install one of the
hundreds of custom themes available from the Moodle website, or if they have some experience in website design, they can develop their own custom theme.

Over the course of this study the theme of Stelly’s Moodle Website was continually modified in an attempt to simplify the user interface and improve the overall functionality of the site. An example of a modification that improved the overall functionality of Stelly’s Moodle Website was a change made to the source code for the “RSS block.” As the “RSS Block” was utilized on dozen of pages to display forum posts from the “Daily News Page”, the Moodle Administrator modified the “RSS Block” to include a link back to the forum that generated the post. With this modification staff were able to post an announcement by clicking on “RSS Feed Title” in the “RSS Block” rather than navigating to the “Daily News Page” which hosted the forum. This type of modification makes a huge difference in the users experience when navigating a website. It also demonstrates that Moodle’s potential in building a learning community has not yet been fully realized.

Further Study

As “a professional learning community is a critical aspect to systematic reform” (Halverson, 2005, p. 5) and “membership to online communities provides teachers with a rich source of professional learning” (Duncan-Howell, 2010, p. 338) exploring Moodle’s ability to aid in the development of a learning community is a concept worthy of further study. Since it was first introduced over two years ago, the Moodle website at Stelly’s Secondary School has been continually evolving. It would be interesting to do another study there now to see if the perceptions of staff members have changed since the data presented in this study was collected at the end of the first year of implementation.

For future research, areas that might be further investigated include:

- **A break down of demographic information amongst participants:** As participants in this study were anonymous, it was not considered relevant to collect demographic information (e.g. age, sex, class, [dis]ability, ethnicity,
etc.) at this time. In future studies, it might be interesting to collect this information so that Moodle Administrators would have a richer understanding of the potentially diverse needs of diverse users.

- **A non-electronic study design:** As previously discussed, the researcher does not have sufficient information to speculate on why some members of the staff population chose not to participate in the study. For future research, it would be interesting to include diverse data collection methods, including more targeted recruitment, to attempt to reach more members of the population. It is possible that a more participatory study, aimed to investigate how all members of the Stelly’s community envision their learning community, would not only potentially lead to greater buy-in for Moodle, but also alternative ways to effectively participate in the learning community without being excluded or “left behind” should they continue to choose not to participate in Moodle.

**Closing Thoughts**

This study has examined the practicality of using Moodle’s Web 2.0 tools to enable online communication and collaboration in a large secondary school. In analysing the data collected it can be concluded that with specific strategies and structures, adequate staff training, and sufficient staff buy-in, Moodle can help build a learning community.

In closing, the researcher would like point out that as technology advances, our current definition of a learning community, and also the manner in which it is developed, may once again mutate. As more user-friendly interfaces emerge, the obstacles that once stood in the way for some users may be removed, providing everyone with a democratic voice as well as unlimited access to the intellectual resources within their learning community.
REFERENCES


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Swan, K. (2002). Building learning communities in online courses: The importance of 
  interaction. Education, Communication Information, 2(1), 23-49.

  Practices Series, 18

  Routledge.


APPENDIX A: LETTERS OF PERMISSION

Human Research Ethics Board
Certificate of Approval

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal Investigator</th>
<th>Department/School</th>
<th>Supervisor</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gord Ritchie</td>
<td>EPLS</td>
<td>Catherine McGregor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's Student</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-Investigator(s):</td>
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**Project Title:** Using Moodle to Develop a Learning Community in a Secondary School

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<td>07-Apr-10</td>
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**Certification**

This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol. Extensions and/or amendments may be approved with the submission of a "Request for Annual Renewal or Modification" form.

Dr. Afzal Suleman
Associate Vice-President, Research
April 22, 2010

Gord Ritchie
3496 Mabel Lake Road
Enderby, BC
V0E 1V5

Dear Gord:

I am pleased to inform you that your request for research proposal entitled “Using Moodle to Develop a Learning Community in a Secondary School” has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Benefit to professional staff related to their practice;
2. Benefit to students further to the outcomes of the research study;
3. Positive or neutral effect on the learning environment, with minimal impact on instructional time;
4. The participation be on a voluntary basis as previously requested;
5. That the identity of all participant be kept confidential;
6. That the results of the research project be shared with School District 63;
7. Completion of all research protocols from the sponsoring university, including ethics review approval.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Heather Gross
District Executive Assistant
Office of the Superintendent of Schools

/hlg

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Saanich Schools

Visit us at our website: www.sd63.bc.ca
APPENDIX B: LETTER OF INFORMATION AND IMPLIED CONSENT

To: [Email]
From: gordritch@gmail.com

Subject: Stelly's Secondary School - Moodle Survey Body: Dear Stelly's Staff,

You are invited to participate in a study entitled “Using Moodle to Develop a Learning Community in a Secondary School” that is being conducted by Gord Ritchie.

Please read the "Letter of Information for Implied Consent" below prior to completing the survey.

Here is a link to the survey: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx

This link is uniquely tied to this survey and your email address. Please do not forward this message.

Thanks for your participation!

LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR IMPLIED CONSENT

PROJECT TITLE:
Using Moodle to Develop a Learning Community in a Secondary School

INTRODUCTION:
Gord Ritchie is a Graduate Student in the department of Educational Leadership at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by phone (250) 588-3802 or e-mail at gritchie@sd63.bc.ca.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Educational Leadership. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Catherine McGregor. You may contact my supervisor at (250) 721-7823.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES:
The purpose of this study will be to determine if a Moodle Website can aid in building a learning community in a large secondary school. The objectives are: 1. To explore strategies and structures of Moodle technology and how they can be used to build a learning community. 2. To consider how new Web 2.0 technologies (Blogs, Forums, Wikis etc.) enable online collaboration and communication.

IMPORTANCE OF THIS RESEARCH:
Research of this type is important because it will explore the potential of using Moodle to
build a learning community through online communication. Building a learning community has become an important priority for schools as they are understood to be central to creating a school culture focused on enhancing student learning. The study of this potential application will inform the field of school improvement and add to the knowledge of how learning communities operate at the school level. Moodle has been used for several years now as an inexpensive, yet highly effective, tool for teachers to manage online courses. Integrated into Moodle are many of the Web 2.0 tools (Blogs, Forums, Wiki’s etc.) that enable multiple users to add content to the web from any computer with an Internet connection. With this ability comes enormous potential for Moodle to be used as much more than a course management system. It can provide a safe place for staff and students to participate in a social network that encourages thoughtful interaction and gives everyone a voice. This research will provide important feedback about both building an online learning community and expanding the capabilities of Moodle beyond it’s original purpose.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION:
You are being asked to participate in this study because as members of Stelly’s/District staff you use Stelly’s Moodle Website on a regular basis. As a result you are able to provide valuable feedback for future Moodle developments.

WHAT IS INVOLVED:
If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include the completion of an online survey.

INCONVENIENCE:
Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including the time it takes to complete the survey. This survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

RISKS:
There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

BENEFITS:
The potential benefits of your participation in this research include an increased ability to collaborate and communicate within the educational community. You will also grow more comfortable with communicating in a web-based world while helping to establish an online learning community. Establishing an online learning community also benefits student learning. Teachers who are able to easily communicate and collaborate with both their colleagues and their students will be more effective, which results in increased student learning. This ultimately benefits society and the state of knowledge in general. Finally, using technology to accomplish these tasks will allow others, around the world, to utilize similar strategies and develop additional structures and techniques that help to build/expand a learning community.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:
Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. Furthermore, if you find any questions intrusive you may choose not to answer those questions. However, because the survey is completed anonymously, the researcher will not be able to identify, and thus withdraw, your responses.

RESEARCHER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH PARTICIPANTS:
The researcher is a teacher in the district and in no formal role of a power over relationship.

ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY:
In terms of protecting your anonymity, your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data, a third party online survey system, Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com) is being used. This email, which was sent you through the researchers Survey Monkey account, contains a unique link to complete the online survey. Participants who choose to complete the survey can do so by clicking on their unique link. The survey can only be completed once through each unique link. The results from each survey will be stored but the participants e-mail address will not be stored. As a result, the researcher will not be able to access the identities of the individual participants or track whom has or has not completed the survey.

DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS:
It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others through a Thesis/Dissertation. A copy of the research project will also be left at the SD #63 Board Office and at Stelly’s Secondary School.

DISPOSAL OF DATA:
Data from this study will be disposed of by deleting the researcher’s Survey Monkey account that hosts the data. The Survey Monkey account will be deleted in August 2010 after the project has been submitted and approved.

CONTACTS:
Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include Gord Ritchie (researcher), and Dr. Catherine McGregor (supervisor); refer to the information at the beginning of the consent form.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

By completing and submitting the online survey through the link below, YOUR FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT IS IMPLIED and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.
Please retain a copy of this letter for your reference.

Link to online survey,

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx

This link is uniquely tied to this survey and your email address. Please do not forward this message.

Please note: If you do not wish to receive further emails from us, please click the link below, and you will be automatically removed from our mailing list.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/optout.aspx
APPENDIX C: WEB-BASED QUESTIONAIRRE

Stelly's Secondary School - Moodle Survey

Disclaimer (SurveyMonkey.com and the Patriot Act)

Please be advised that information about you that is gathered for this research study uses an online program (SurveyMonkey.com) located in the U.S. As such, there is a possibility that information about you may be accessed, without your knowledge or consent, by the U.S. government in compliance with the U.S. Patriot Act.

User Profile

1. Please rate yourself on your comfort with each of the following Web 2.0 technologies.

Note: The term Web 2.0 is used to describe a web application that allows users to create content and participate in online collaboration and communication. Social networking sites, Wikis, Blogs and Moodle Forums (such as the ones that host our announcements) are a few examples of Web 2.0 technology.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Technology</th>
<th>I am unfamiliar with this technology</th>
<th>I understand this technology</th>
<th>I use this technology</th>
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<td>Wikis</td>
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<td>Moodle Forums</td>
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If there are other Web 2.0 technologies that you use on a regular basis please describe them below.

Frequency of Visits

2. How many times per week do you visit Stelly's Moodle Website (http://stellys.sd63.bc.ca)?

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<thead>
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<th>6-10 times per week</th>
<th>11-20 times per week</th>
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<td>Staff Room Page</td>
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<td>Daily News Page</td>
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<td>Your Personal Course Page</td>
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If you frequently visit other pages on Stelly's Moodle Website please specify which ones and why you frequent them.

Frequency of Contribution
### Stelly's Secondary School - Moodle Survey

#### 3. How often do you contribute to Stelly's Moodle Website (http://stellys.sd63.bc.ca)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>0-1 times per week</th>
<th>2-5 times per week</th>
<th>6-10 times per week</th>
<th>11-20 times per week</th>
<th>more than 20 times per week</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Add an announcement...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit a front page story...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update information on a page you have access to (Ex. Athletics, Clubs etc.)...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update your personal Moodle course...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add a forum post to the Staff Room page...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute in another way...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you contribute to Stelly's Moodle Website in another way please specify how and explain:  

---

### Ability to Participate and Contribute

#### 4. Please rate yourself on your ability to use Stelly's Moodle Website (http://stellys.sd63.bc.ca).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Not Meeting Expectations</th>
<th>Minimally Meeting Expectations</th>
<th>Fully Meeting Expectations</th>
<th>Exceeding Expectations</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Navigate and find information on the website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navigate and find information on the Staff Room Page</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add announcements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add forum posts to the Staff Room page</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update information or pages you have access to Design your own course page</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please identify any area(s)/aspect(s) of the website you do not feel comfortable using:  

---

### On-Line Communication and Collaboration
Stelly's Secondary School - Moodle Survey

5. Do you believe that Moodle technologies, such as the forums that host our daily announcements, enable online communication and collaboration?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online Communication</th>
<th>Dissagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online Collaboration</th>
<th>Dissagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please elaborate on your response to the question above.

---

Professional Development

6. Are you interested in learning more about any of the following components of Stelly's Moodle Website (http://stellys.sd63.bc.ca)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Maybe</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to log in?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to find the information you are looking for?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to post announcements?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to edit a page you have access to?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to access files on the Staff Room Page?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to create your own page/course?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to add Media (Pictures/Video) to a page or forum post?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to use Forums?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to use Wikis?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If there is something you would like to learn how to do that was not mentioned above please elaborate.

---

Building a Learning Community
Stelly's Secondary School - Moodle Survey

7. Do you believe that it is important for our school to try and build a learning community as defined below.

Note: "The defining quality of a learning community is that there is a culture of learning in which everyone is involved in a collective effort of understanding" (Bielaczyc & Collins, 1999)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building a Learning Community</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Please elaborate on your response to the question above.

Using Technology to Build a Learning Community

8. Please comment on how effective the following strategies and/or structures have been in building a learning community at Stelly's Secondary School.

- Ability to add your own announcements to the website: Not Effective | Somewhat Effective | Very Effective | N/A
- Ability to edit specific sections of the website: Not Effective | Somewhat Effective | Very Effective | N/A
- Daily Announcements-Power Point Edition: Not Effective | Somewhat Effective | Very Effective | N/A
- Front Page Stories: Not Effective | Somewhat Effective | Very Effective | N/A
- Staff Room Page: Not Effective | Somewhat Effective | Very Effective | N/A

Please identify 1) key aspects that have helped build a learning community 2) obstacles that have prevented the building of a learning community.

Looking Forward

9. Please help us move forward by providing any suggestions or feedback as to how technology could be used to aid us in building a learning community in a large secondary school.
APPENDIX D: DATA COLLECTED

Stelly's Secondary School - Moodle Survey

Please rate yourself on your comfort with each of the following Web 2.0 technologies. Note: The term Web 2.0 is used to describe a web application that allows users to create content and participate in online collaboration and communication. Social networking sites, Wikis, Blogs and Moodle Forums (such as the ones that host our announcements) are a few examples of Web 2.0 technology.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>I am unfamiliar with this technology</th>
<th>I understand this technology</th>
<th>I use this technology</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking Sites</td>
<td>15.6% (5)</td>
<td>34.4% (11)</td>
<td>50.0% (16)</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>17.6% (6)</td>
<td>50.0% (17)</td>
<td>32.4% (11)</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wikis</td>
<td>30.3% (10)</td>
<td>51.5% (17)</td>
<td>18.2% (6)</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moodle Forums</td>
<td>11.8% (4)</td>
<td>50.0% (17)</td>
<td>38.2% (13)</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If there are other Web 2.0 technologies that you use on a regular basis please describe them below.

1. I have attempted to use a couple of forums but never successfully. Apr 28, 2010 6:55 PM
2. twitter May 4, 2010 6:10 PM
3. photosynth, picassa, wordle, May 12, 2010 7:53 PM

1. Please rate yourself on your comfort with each of the following Web 2.0

If there are other Web 2.0 technologies that you use on a regular basis please describe them below.

1. I have attempted to use a couple of forums but never successfully. Apr 28, 2010 6:55 PM
2. twitter May 4, 2010 6:10 PM
3. photosynth, picassa, wordle, May 12, 2010 7:53 PM
Stelly's Secondary School - Moodle Survey

### How many times per week do you visit Stelly's Moodle Website (http://stellys.sd63.bc.ca)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0-1 times per week</th>
<th>2-5 times per week</th>
<th>6-10 times per week</th>
<th>11-20 times per week</th>
<th>more than 20 times per week</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Page</strong></td>
<td>15.6% (5)</td>
<td>31.3% (10)</td>
<td>31.3% (10)</td>
<td>9.4% (3)</td>
<td>12.5% (4)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staff Room Page</strong></td>
<td>31.3% (10)</td>
<td>50.0% (16)</td>
<td>9.4% (3)</td>
<td>9.4% (3)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daily News Page</strong></td>
<td>28.1% (9)</td>
<td>43.8% (14)</td>
<td>12.5% (4)</td>
<td>6.3% (2)</td>
<td>9.4% (3)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Your Personal Course Page (If you have one)</strong></td>
<td>43.3% (13)</td>
<td>6.7% (2)</td>
<td>3.3% (1)</td>
<td>3.3% (1)</td>
<td>10.0% (3)</td>
<td>33.3% (10)</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Pages</strong></td>
<td>57.1% (16)</td>
<td>14.3% (4)</td>
<td>7.1% (2)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>7.1% (2)</td>
<td>14.3% (4)</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you frequently visit other pages on Stelly's Moodle Website please specify which ones and why you frequent them.

1. Online documents page.
2. Grad - to support students I work with.
3. Library - I use the links on a daily basis.
4. Main page 2-5 times er week ( I cannot seem to have the above buttons register my choice?
   Staff room 0-1
   Daily news Power point 2-5
   Personal web page 11-20 times per week
5. moodle book

1 of 1
Stelly's Secondary School - Moodle Survey

How often do you contribute to Stelly's Moodle Website (http://stellys.sd63.bc.ca)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>0-1 times per week</th>
<th>2-5 times per week</th>
<th>6-10 times per week</th>
<th>11-20 times per week</th>
<th>more than 20 times per week</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Add an announcement...</td>
<td>74.2% (23)</td>
<td>16.1% (5)</td>
<td>6.5% (2)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>3.2% (1)</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit a front page story...</td>
<td>83.3% (25)</td>
<td>6.7% (2)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>10.0% (3)</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update information on a page you have access to (Ex. Athletics, Clubs etc.)...</td>
<td>69.0% (20)</td>
<td>3.4% (1)</td>
<td>6.9% (2)</td>
<td>10.3% (3)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>10.3% (3)</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update your personal Moodle course...</td>
<td>62.1% (18)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>3.4% (1)</td>
<td>3.4% (1)</td>
<td>3.4% (1)</td>
<td>27.6% (8)</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add a forum post to the Staff Room page...</td>
<td>86.7% (26)</td>
<td>6.7% (2)</td>
<td>3.3% (1)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>3.3% (1)</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute in another way...</td>
<td>68.0% (17)</td>
<td>8.0% (2)</td>
<td>8.0% (2)</td>
<td>4.0% (1)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>12.0% (3)</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you contribute to Stelly's Moodle Website in another way please specify how and explain.

4 answered question
32 skipped question

1. How often do you contribute to Stelly's Moodle Website

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Since I am uninterested in using this system (and there fore, unable to us it) I occasionally ask my CUPE support person to post announcements.</td>
<td>Apr 28, 2010 6:58 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I post the daily announcements</td>
<td>May 4, 2010 6:20 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I contribute to the front page about 2-5 times a year update athletics 2-5 times a year update my personal moodle course 2-5 times per week</td>
<td>May 4, 2010 10:25 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>my staff add the menu every day</td>
<td>May 12, 2010 7:55 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Stelly's Secondary School - Moodle Survey

**Please rate yourself on your ability to use Stelly's Moodle Website (http://stellys.sd63.bc.ca).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Not Meeting Expectations</th>
<th>Minimally Meeting Expectations</th>
<th>Fully Meeting Expectations</th>
<th>Exceeding Expectations</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Navigate and find information on the website</td>
<td>9.4% (3)</td>
<td>6.3% (2)</td>
<td>68.8% (22)</td>
<td>12.5% (4)</td>
<td>3.1% (1)</td>
<td>2.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navigate and find information on the Staff Room Page</td>
<td>6.5% (2)</td>
<td>9.7% (3)</td>
<td>61.3% (19)</td>
<td>19.4% (6)</td>
<td>3.2% (1)</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add announcements</td>
<td>19.4% (6)</td>
<td>25.8% (8)</td>
<td>25.8% (8)</td>
<td>12.9% (4)</td>
<td>16.1% (5)</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add forum posts to the Staff Room page</td>
<td>29.0% (9)</td>
<td>12.9% (4)</td>
<td>32.3% (10)</td>
<td>9.7% (3)</td>
<td>16.1% (5)</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update information on pages you have access to</td>
<td>25.8% (8)</td>
<td>29.0% (9)</td>
<td>19.4% (6)</td>
<td>12.9% (4)</td>
<td>12.9% (4)</td>
<td>2.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design your own course page</td>
<td>45.2% (14)</td>
<td>16.1% (5)</td>
<td>6.5% (2)</td>
<td>9.7% (3)</td>
<td>22.6% (7)</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please identify any area(s)/aspect(s) of the website you do not feel comfortable using.

---

1. **Please rate yourself on your ability to use Stelly's Moodle Website**

   Please identify any area(s)/aspect(s) of the website you do not feel comfortable using.

   1. I do not use or participate because I feel this is just one more layer of techno hype that interferes with my ability to get my job done.  
      Apr 28, 2010 6:59 PM
   2. I use a wiki site I created as my course page.  
      Apr 28, 2010 8:25 PM
   3. Navigate and find on: website = fully meeting expectations  
      Staff room page = minimally meeting expectations  
      Add announcements = minimally  
      Add forum posts to staff room = not meeting expectations  
      Update info = fully meeting  
      Design your own course page = fully meeting  
      May 4, 2010 10:28 PM
1. Please rate yourself on your ability to use Stelly's Moodle Website

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I am learning how to use the quiz component and struggling with that. My students have not had success with some of my quiz's. I am learning how to use hot potato quiz's. I would like to add a block to our site called &quot;Progress Bar&quot;. It could be very helpful in giving students a visual graphic of their progress. What assignments are due, what are completed. It is available from the Moodle Org. It is hard finding the time to learn more about certain components and uploading information and files to the site.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do you believe that Moodle technologies, such as the forums that host our daily announcements, enable online communication and collaboration?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dissagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Communication</td>
<td>6.3% (2)</td>
<td>37.5% (12)</td>
<td>50.0% (16)</td>
<td>6.3% (2)</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Collaboration</td>
<td>16.1% (5)</td>
<td>45.2% (14)</td>
<td>29.0% (9)</td>
<td>9.7% (3)</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please elaborate on your response the question above.

10 answered question
32 skipped question

1. Do you believe that Moodle technologies, such as the forums that host our

Please elaborate on your response the question above.

1. If you want me to know something, just send me an e-mail. Don't ask me to go hunting and sifting for it in some place that is obscure to me.
   Apr 28, 2010 7:00 PM

2. The usefulness of the site depends on the regularity of people checking in and responding. Collaboration isn't possible unless response time is short.
   Apr 28, 2010 7:11 PM

3. I spend so many hours every day online answering emails for work and creating lesson plans, etc. I don't spend anymore time then I have to online. If I need something specific I will try to find it on the moodle site and when I log into check my email I take a minute to read the front page. I did not utilize classroom announcements in my classrooms this year because both classrooms I taught in did not have projectors. I have my own wiki site that students and anyone else can access. Here I post daily activities and also include copies of all assignments done in class.
   Apr 28, 2010 8:29 PM

4. I find moodle to be a very unfriendly environment primarily because the I think the user interface is poorly designed.
   Apr 28, 2010 11:26 PM

5. I think not enough people are comfortable with this yet.
   May 4, 2010 6:22 PM

6. Communication = strongly agree
   Collaboration = somewhat agree. Not everyone has equal training to use collaboration effectively, and those who want training (during heavy semesters) cannot coordinate enough out of class time to train.
   May 4, 2010 10:30 PM

7. Moodle technologies enhance the process of communication by allowing all individuals to post comments/thoughts/announcements in a timely and obvious fashion for all to see and or discuss within the online community. It goes without saying that this is a necessary and welcomed advancement in the art of communication within a school, one that advances the limited nature of basic email and standard website connectivity.
   May 12, 2010 3:24 AM
1. Do you believe that Moodle technologies, such as the forums that host our

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Please elaborate on your response the question above.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I feel that collaboration is best done face to face. Technology is a way to supplement face to face communication only. Meaningful decisions need to be made in person in schools, as you miss tone of voice, body language and social processes without in person communication.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

May 12, 2010 5:10 AM

| 9 | I find for the most part that few people actually use the moodle system unless they first hear about something, and want to find out about it. It is slow to get into, is often out of date with old stuff left lying in there, even though relatively easy to use. I find it generally cluttered visually, and don't have time to sort through page after page...I'd say I read it once a week on average, doing a general catch up when I have time. In other words, because of the time it takes to access, and discern what matters, I use it very seldom for information purposes. Perhaps a one page daily UP FRONT, or ON TOP, would speed things up, and the rest could sort down chronologically...by subject and then by chronology, as I mentioned, takes more time than the usual quick reference available to me. By doing this survey, for example, I've spent more than the MOODLE TIME available in my day. |

May 12, 2010 3:25 PM

| 10 | I really believe that the Moodle site if promoted could be a fantastic tool for communication. For the past 8 years I have heard teachers talk about the need to communicate with parents. There is a "Parent log in" bar we can add to give access to parents to check their students grades, assignments and what is happening in their classes. The problem is that not enough students are aware of the capability of this tool. This term when I logged on my students to their class many had never accessed the Moodle. We need as a team of teachers to promote this and the problem is many of the teacher s do not use it ar the TA's. I had to teach all my educational assistants hoe to log on and use it as well this term. It has alot of potential. My students in my field study for SFU said that my forums in my class was helpful. They learned from other students as they posted discussions. Also my Chef Assistants are discovering the message tool to contact their students who work for them at lunch. |

May 12, 2010 8:08 PM
### Stelly's Secondary School - Moodle Survey

**Are you interested in learning more about any of the following components of Stelly’s Moodle Website (http://stellys.sd63.bc.ca)?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Maybe</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to log in?</td>
<td>83.9% (26)</td>
<td>6.5% (2)</td>
<td>9.7% (3)</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to find the information you are looking for?</td>
<td>71.0% (22)</td>
<td>19.4% (6)</td>
<td>9.7% (3)</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to post announcements?</td>
<td>61.3% (19)</td>
<td>25.8% (8)</td>
<td>12.9% (4)</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to edit a page you have access to?</td>
<td>51.6% (16)</td>
<td>29.0% (9)</td>
<td>19.4% (6)</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to access files on the Staff Room Page?</td>
<td>77.4% (24)</td>
<td>12.9% (4)</td>
<td>9.7% (3)</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to create your own page/course?</td>
<td>43.3% (13)</td>
<td>26.7% (8)</td>
<td>30.0% (9)</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to add Media (Pictures/Video) to a page or forum post?</td>
<td>45.2% (14)</td>
<td>19.4% (6)</td>
<td>35.5% (11)</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to use Forums?</td>
<td>54.8% (17)</td>
<td>25.8% (8)</td>
<td>19.4% (6)</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to use Wiki’s?</td>
<td>38.7% (12)</td>
<td>25.8% (8)</td>
<td>35.5% (11)</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If there is something you would like to learn how to do that was not mentioned above please elaborate.

5 answered question  
31 skipped question

### 1. Are you interested in learning more about any of the following components of Stelly’s Moodle Website (http://stellys.sd63.bc.ca)?

1. What I need to do my job better is more time. Moodle takes away from the already limited time I have.  
   Apr 28, 2010 7:02 PM

2. I regret that I have given up on Moodle after what I consider to be a conscientious and sustained effort to make use of it. I have concluded that I will not spend more time on it except as minimally required (Staff room material, announcements, viewing front page). I await a better interface or a better environment.  
   Apr 28, 2010 11:29 PM
1. Are you interested in learning more about any of the following components of
If there is something you would like to learn how to do that was not mentioned above please elaborate.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I put &quot;no&quot; because I know how to do this activities already. Apr 29, 2010 2:32 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>quiz’s, attendance component, database, grading component, how to link a word with the glossary tool, how to up load files to a place that I can access form other classes. For example I have a class for apprentices with the same recipe as another class. How can I upload one file of the recipe so all classes can link to it. I am presently uploading the same files to every class, very time consuming. parent log in access? Progress bar? addition? May 12, 2010 8:15 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I just don't make the time to learn. May 18, 2010 12:25 AM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Brent
Stelly's Secondary School - Moodle Survey

**Do you believe that it is important for our school to try and build a learning community as defined below. Note: "The defining quality of a learning community is that there is a culture of learning in which everyone is involved in a collective effort of understanding" (Bielaczyc & Collins, 1999)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building a Learning Community</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>13.3% (4)</td>
<td><strong>86.7% (26)</strong></td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please elaborate on your response to the question above.

8 answered question
30 skipped question

1. Do you believe that it is important for our school to try and build a learning community?

Please elaborate on your response to the question above.

1. I think Moodle is a potentially divisive piece of technology that may interfere with the creation of an effective learning community.  
   Apr 28, 2010 7:04 PM

2. Moodle can be a tool to engage learners who are not otherwise "involved in the collective effort of understanding."  
   Apr 28, 2010 7:13 PM

3. Important yes-but what does that quote really mean? I see "cultures of learning" going on right now everyday here at this school-doesn't mean everyone in the classroom at the time is participating-you can't force all people to want to learn nd be part of a learning community. 
   Apr 28, 2010 8:35 PM

4. I believe it is extremely important - essential - that we build on-line learning communities. Sadly, I have very serious doubts that Moodle is up to the task. If you are looking for a summary it is that "Moodle needs to be rebuilt to meet the needs of users. The fact that Moodle likely does meet the needs of its designers is irrelevant. Think 'improved user interface'. When a person needs to know how many pixels (200 by the way) are needed to define a good horizontal length for a photo on the web page, you can tell the environment is at minimum a hostile one for most users. 
   Apr 28, 2010 11:34 PM

5. We too often use our pro d time to focus on social issues for students instead of how to improve learning (ability) for students using different methods, resources and styles. I want to use the internet/moodle as an effective tool to enhance student learning.  
   May 4, 2010 10:35 PM

6. Public school communities must have simple yet effective forms of communication to be successful. Moodle technologies provide a simple option for its users to stay connected, especially for a school staff who must consistently stay in communication with each other. In order for this to happen though, it is imperative that everyone is on the same page and keeps up to date with the learning technology, and this is the "collective effort of understanding" that Bielaczyc & Collins are referring to. I believe that the possibilities are endless when there actually IS a culture of continuous learning by the members of a learning community.  
   May 12, 2010 4:52 AM
1. Do you believe that it is important for our school to try and build a learning community? Please elaborate on your response to the question above.

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>If a school is to build a learning community, staff meetings need to be organized using best practices. Routine announcements are a waste of time. Staff meeting time should be used for professional development primarily. Everything else should be organized around this goal.</td>
<td>May 12, 2010 5:14 AM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The Moodle can be a very important link in helping students achieve success. If the learning assignments and objectives are on the Moodle, students can work at their own pace anywhere. Students with attendance issues can be monitored and complete assignments over a long period of time allowing for full completion. The teachers can guide and mentor these students to be successful in their learning. It is a very Social Constructive approach to teaching. There are many tools on line to access to enable visual and cognitive learning. The Moodle enables the student to access more information other than the teacher. The communication tools encourage constructivism also. My students commented that they like the forum and the discussion because they could read what other students were learning and they learned from them. Shy students commented they like this format because they could discuss a topic and not be uncomfortable. they entered in the discussion where in a class they would not.</td>
<td>May 12, 2010 8:26 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please comment on how effective the following strategies and/or structures have been in building a learning community at Stelly's Secondary School.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Not Effective</th>
<th>Somewhat Effective</th>
<th>Very Effective</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to add your own announcements to the website</td>
<td>6.7% (2)</td>
<td>50.0% (15)</td>
<td>26.7% (8)</td>
<td>16.7% (5)</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to edit specific sections of the website</td>
<td>16.7% (5)</td>
<td>50.0% (15)</td>
<td>16.7% (5)</td>
<td>16.7% (5)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Announcements-Power Point Edition</td>
<td>10.0% (3)</td>
<td>40.0% (12)</td>
<td>40.0% (12)</td>
<td>10.0% (3)</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front Page Stories</td>
<td>6.7% (2)</td>
<td>36.7% (11)</td>
<td>53.3% (16)</td>
<td>3.3% (1)</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Room Page</td>
<td>10.0% (3)</td>
<td>56.7% (17)</td>
<td>30.0% (9)</td>
<td>3.3% (1)</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please identify 1) key aspects that have helped build a learning community 2) obstacles that have prevented the building of a learning community.

13 answered question
30 skipped question

1. Please comment on how effective the following strategies and/or structures

Please identify 1) key aspects that have helped build a learning community 2) obstacles that have prevented the building of a learning community.

1. 1. the concepts behind allowing staff to access and edit online information make sense, and theoretically should enhance the learning community. Information is easily accessible, saves paper, allows everyone to see and add comments (in forums)........

   STAFF ROOM is the single greatest page on the website. I use it at least 2 or 3 times a week for forms, lists, schedules etc. AWESOME! BUT.....

   2. Our technology in school is impaired, wounded, tragic!! I love the idea of PPT announcements, but didn't run them...no ceiling (or permanently) mounted projector. Wouldn't it be great if every class could just start the day (and yes...there are 5 extra mins in block #1 to do this) by projecting the website and daily announcements? If everywhere you went in school the website / announcements were being shown.

   In a perfect world of technological accessibility AND proficiency to use the technology, our Moodle system would be AMAZING. Currently though, it's probably very effective for a few (those with the skill and the tech to back it up), somewhat effective for the majority (maybe have skill and no good tech or vice
1. Please comment on how effective the following strategies and/or structures
Please identify 1) key aspects that have helped build a learning community 2) obstacles that have prevented the building of a learning community.

<p>| | |</p>
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<th></th>
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</table>
| 2 | 1) Having one place where people can access information is good. We should all have access to the same information.  
2) Just because it is there does not mean that people will access the information. I do not believe that a majority of people are using the resource. |
|   | Apr 28, 2010 7:04 PM |
| 3 | Teachers and students are already bombarded with information from multiple sources. The more sources, the less chance of getting the message out. Moodle is one more source which there fore guarantees some people are going to miss out. |
|   | Apr 28, 2010 7:08 PM |
| 4 | Making the number of activities going on the school well known to both staff and students is important. How to deliver that information is the challenge. |
|   | Apr 28, 2010 7:14 PM |
| 5 | We need staff to "buy-in" to the Staff Room page |
|   | Apr 28, 2010 9:07 PM |
| 6 | Helped: It is a good start, and demonstrates that the goal of an online community is a good one. In other words, despite my negative conclusions this has been a worthwhile and positive attempt to fill a most important part of the community.  
Kudos for giving it a go. Obstacles: The user interface does not appear to have been designed with users in mind. That aspect should have been the first priority. It seems to have been forgotten almost entirely. |
|   | Apr 28, 2010 11:38 PM |
| 7 | 1) support from individual staff around moodle, like minded thinking about technology  
2) lack of staff knowledge, apprehension and willingness to use technology |
|   | Apr 29, 2010 11:44 AM |
| 8 | 1) front page news and power point daily announcements have increased student and staff awareness about successes and upcoming cultural events. More students and staff buy in to multimedia information.  
2) Staff room page is a bit ambiguous as to where to find specific information, long lists not grouped according to common info. I still can't find the duty schedule. I have to open many files. I still find it useful, but not very efficient. |
|   | May 4, 2010 10:39 PM |
| 9 | 1) Daily announcements have been excellent: total interconnectedness within our school by way of instantaneous messaging that can be added at any time of the day (VERY beneficial for those of us who need to add in announcements at the last minute!). Also, front page stories are unmeasureable in terms of their effect, b/c they are lasting success stories that are visible to all in our community (if not the world) rather than just read over a PA system within our school.  
2) Unfortunately some of our staff did not buy in to the new moodle technology and have made a point of not contributing to the learning community that is passing them by. As such, the richness level of the conversations and addition of information from all subject areas, teams, clubs, etc is not as good as it probably should be by now. |
|   | May 12, 2010 4:59 AM |
| 10 | Adding a meeting reminder by email that is linked to to a staff calendar has been very useful. |
|   | May 12, 2010 5:17 AM |
| 11 | soo my comments about about unneeded and accumulated clutter, and access time and sorting through to get to CURRENT DAILY INFORMATION |
|   | May 12, 2010 3:27 PM |
| 12 | 1) Love the announcements and the daily updates of student progress. The main page is very informativeMy class course; the daily discussion, emailing,  
2) not enough teacher know about it and how to use it. |
|   | May 12, 2010 8:31 PM |
| 13 | I have not embraced this technology yet |
|   | May 18, 2010 12:26 AM |

Brent
Stelly's Secondary School - Moodle Survey

Please help us move forward by providing any suggestions or feedback as to how technology could be used to aid us in building a learning community in a large secondary school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>answered question</th>
<th>15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>skipped question</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Please help us move forward by providing any suggestions or feedback as to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Text</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I think we're doing well with the implementation of Moodle. For staff members, all the access is there in terms of forms, comments, announcements etc. But the biggest issue in terms of technology for us AND students is money. Secondary schools (well I'm assuming most) will always be years behind students in terms of technology. We just can't afford to be current...at least not for the school as a whole. Maybe there's individuals that have current technology, but not most. I don't mean knowledge or skill, but simply in terms of access. I can go home and work on my 24&quot; iMac, edit movies etc...but when I come to school, my computer won't load web pages, I can't buffer and play a youtube video that kids made for a class assignment, and my projector is broken and shattered because it fell on the ground. Kids send me projects by e-mail but I can't open them etc..... We have such great potential.....but we're not quite there.</td>
<td>Apr 28, 2010 7:06 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Having regular groups meet to discuss how it is being used in their classrooms etc...last half of each staff meeting.</td>
<td>Apr 28, 2010 7:10 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I'm sorry, I just don't see the connection between the goal of building a &quot;learning community&quot; and the use of moodle as a means of distributing information. That is not to say I am totally against the use of moodle. In the past I had almost my entire Science 9 and Science 10 program on Moodle when I taught in the Flexible Studies program in SD61 where students often worked at their own pace and needed to know what was coming up next if they were going to be out of town for a month or two or they wanted to get a head start on the next year's course work.</td>
<td>Apr 28, 2010 7:14 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Putting more frequently used items on Moodle so that staff slowly become accustomed to using it regularly.</td>
<td>Apr 28, 2010 7:16 PM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Please help us move forward by providing any suggestions or feedback as to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Text</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remove unnecessary technology such as Facebook and block gaming sites. Allow access to computers for learning purposes only—make this strict. Use YouTube and other educational sites to supplement learning and not replace it. Introduce smart boards—I’d use one for sure everyday if I had one. Have projectors in all classroom and train ir give workshops on how to use them to supplement learning and to reduce PAPER assignments. Give tangible examples for seasoned teachers who are anti-technology and show them how to use technology to make their life easier and to enhance teaching practices. Utilize teachers in school who are comfortable with technology and have them give workshops on Pro-D to help other teachers. Strongly encourage teacher hw pages—if used properly and integrated into teaching practices they can be highly effective and reduce teacher workload.</td>
<td>Apr 28, 2010 8:43 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have to learn to navigate the troubled path of “moving people” forward. This is a wonderful tool and we need to use it as effectively as we can.</td>
<td>Apr 28, 2010 9:10 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find a way to deliver low level ‘knowledge’ type information without the need for a teacher. Students should be able to ‘become acquainted with each topic using a digital device of some sort. Understanding and critical thinking could occur in classrooms in groups and whole class activities. Also, use technology to help break the factory model system of learning by making it possible for distributed and cooperative learning to occur using technology. And employ popular student devices such as cell phones and ipods to deliver material. Hey - thanks for doing this kind of research. It is very germane and highly important. All the best in your writeup. Sorry I couldn’t be able to give more positive responses about the Moodle site, but I know you wanted the straight up way that I see and feel about it. Best, you probably know from whom by now! Take Care.</td>
<td>Apr 28, 2010 11:45 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more interactive aspects that interest young people</td>
<td>Apr 29, 2010 2:35 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More training in the usage would be helpful</td>
<td>May 3, 2010 5:42 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students respond to multimedia, video presentations. More student based video productions for cultural events and maybe slip in an academic topic per week done in a humorous style. A 2 min video on any course topic presented by students. A once a week ‘Stelly’s news’ by student council. A roving group of film students could take a small group from a class to produce the video. An enrichment activity. Only once a semester per class, not a huge commitment for general classroom teachers. Promotes all curricular areas presently underrepresented in multimedia presentations in the school.</td>
<td>May 4, 2010 10:47 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will look at this again after Albert Edward if possible, otherwise, sorry I couldn’t contribute more, because I would like to.</td>
<td>May 12, 2010 1:40 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using moodle to document group discussions at staff meetings has been very useful and effective—by far the best use of moodle for pro D and building learning communities from my perspective.</td>
<td>May 12, 2010 5:18 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Direct email alert when there is something urgent or important works best. I notice some people are doing this occasionally when they want to be sure their moodle entry is going to read in a timely manner - I appreciate this very much, but realize their work load has been voluntarily doubled...for me, MOODLE AS A MODEL ISN'T WORKING AS AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TOOL BECAUSE IT IS STILL PRIMARILY ABOUT A NEW TOY, AND NOT EFFECTIVELY ABOUT COMMUNICATING WHAT MATTERS TODAY, THIS WEEK, THIS MONTH. I am not reluctant to change, but when &quot;new ideas&quot; are not any faster, better, clarifying, or more universally useful, I wonder why we are going down this track. I hear, generally, &quot;most people don't bother with the moodle website thing, unless they are afraid they've missed something&quot; - something they otherwise have heard about from another staff member, or in a meeting, or at lunch. Nevertheless, I will continue to try to speed read the thing once a week or so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May 12, 2010 3:34 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Professional development and hands on training about Moodle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May 12, 2010 8:31 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I usually like technology, but have not had time made for Moodle yet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May 18, 2010 12:27 AM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Brent