

## Instructor Blogs from Spring Semester and Summer Sessions 2007

University of Missouri - St. Louis

### **Post on June 5 2007** ([permalink](#)) -[edithistorydelete](#)

Created on Tuesday, 06/05/2007 8:15 PM by [ENGLISH](#) Faculty

Updated on Tuesday, 06/05/2007 8:15 PM by [ENGLISH](#) Faculty

I'm currently reviewing Carol Booth Olson's - The Reading/Writing Connection - for my Writing for Teachers class. I just came across this quote: The teacher's goal is not transmission, but transaction; that is, we want not to make meaning for our students but rather to provide them with the tools to construct their own. This expresses succinctly what I heard many of us say in today's meeting. [NAME] W-B Tuesday evening. . .

[Comments \(1\)](#)

### **Faculty Review of the Room** ([permalink](#)) -[edithistorydelete](#)

Created on Tuesday, 05/15/2007 9:15 AM by [BUS](#) Faculty

Updated on Tuesday, 05/15/2007 9:15 AM by [BUS](#) Faculty

Bill Klein and I ran into each other in the Dining Hall of the MSC, and we thought it would be a good idea to hold a colloquium of sorts about the room. I have suggested to him the date of May 23, at about 11 am, hoping that we can use the room itself on that date. This may be too short for notice, but could we consider this?

[Comments \(1\)](#)

### **In need of 449 Faculty & Student Feedback** ([permalink](#)) -[edithistorydelete](#)

Created on Monday, 04/02/2007 7:00 PM by [IT](#) MANAGER

I hope everyone enjoyed their Spring Break. Over the break [BLANK] and I gave a presentation at Helix on the Innovative Classroom Design in SSB 449 (special thanks to Bill for help with the content!).

One item that came up and is going to be very important for us to work on is how the students and you the instructors feel about how the room is working for the courses in the room.

Over the next few weeks we will likely have surveys' available for you and your students.

In the meantime I was wondering if you would be willing to gather some data from your students in the form of a blog within your MyGateway course site. You may have other ideas to help generate data, but a sample would be from a

previous post that Bill provided. It would be a big help if you could post this or something similar in your course sites and encourage your students to provide feedback on the use of the room. This data is going to be very important when it comes to being able to create more or similar rooms to this setup.

As you know, our classroom is new and different from others you might have experienced. It is, in fact, an experiment in teaching and learning and in technology and facilities development. We've based this classroom on a great deal of research in education, educational psychology, information technology, social movements, and educational architecture, and we think we've built a classroom that can facilitate the learning process. You, however, are the only ones who can tell us if it really works for you. Throughout the semester, please take a few minutes to reflect on how the room makes a difference in what you are doing in this class and what you are getting out of it. Consider such questions as:

Does the room make you comfortable? Does the comfort make learning easier, or better? Is it easier to do group work? Do you feel more involved in the course and course activities? What about the technology? Is it easily accessible to you? Are you using it to learn? How?

You can also use this space to vent your frustrations or to help us understand what we can fix or do better. As our "beta testers" you have an important perspective and you can play a crucial role in helping us improve. We appreciate any comments or insight you might offer.

If you have any additional ideas on generating data/feedback please let us all know your thoughts and suggestions!

[Comments](#)

**First-timer** ([permalink](#)) -[edithistorydelete](#)

Created on Wednesday, 03/14/2007 5:10 PM by POLI SCI Faculty

On Saturday, March 10, I conducted an all-day session on technology and qualitative methods in political science for our Ph.D. students. They really liked the room, its airyness and relaxed quality. I made use of but a fraction of the technology in the room. I hope to be able to use it again for similar intensive sessions. The versatility was very welcome.

Although the technology options were rather dizzying, I couldn't help but think about the need to improve the dismal physical condition of many of our regular classrooms. The technology is terrific but there are decidedly "low-tech" aspects of our classrooms (seating, chalkboards, lighting, ventilation systems) that impact

our students, perhaps to a greater degree. Even those with a "stick" computer are (to my way of thinking) antiquarian in their design. I am particularly annoyed that a mature graduate student who might work all day in their own office or at some other place of employment comes here to sit in a desk/chair designed for high school students.

It was a refreshing change to be in a bright, cheery space with carpeting and flexible seating. Too bad more of our classrooms can't incorporate these less-costly and less-high-tech elements.

[Comments \(1\)](#)

**Post on March 14 2007** ([permalink](#)) -[edithistorydelete](#)

Created on Wednesday, 03/14/2007 11:40 AM by [FLL](#) Faculty  
Updated on Wednesday, 03/14/2007 11:40 AM by [FLL](#) Faculty

When using Wimba VoiceBoard, we're still having issues with the recording quality with the wireless connections. The recordings either sound as if they were made underwater and are extremely distorted, or simply cut in and out a lot. Any chance there's a fix in the works? I only had 9 students in class this morning attempting to record a short message, so I can't imagine how it would work in a full class of 23! Sometimes, I can assign these activities to be done outside of class which gets around this issue, but sometimes that doesn't fit the assignment and the recordings need to be done in class. Help!

[Comments](#)

**Trouble with Laptop B** ([permalink](#)) -[edithistorydelete](#)

Created on Wednesday, 02/07/2007 7:13 AM by [\[NAME\]](#)  
Updated on Wednesday, 02/07/2007 7:13 AM by [\[NAME\]](#)

I tried to hook up a laptop in area B and was told there was no signal. The student and I checked, and I had it hooked up correctly, but it did not work.

[Comments \(3\)](#)

**Microphones** ([permalink](#)) -[edithistorydelete](#)

Created on Friday, 02/02/2007 9:35 AM by [FLL](#) Faculty  
Updated on Monday, 02/12/2007 11:36 AM by [FLL](#) Faculty

I have a fairly large class and they usually spread themselves throughout the entire room. This is usually good because they work in small groups or pairs. However, when we come together as a class, it is very difficult for students to hear each other from one side of the room to the next. One day, I tried to use the hand held microphone, which meant I was sprinting from one side of the room to

the other. Needless to say, it didn't work very well. I was wondering if we could find a multi-microphone system so there would be 3 or 4 microphones spread across the room.

Another microphone question: has anyone been able to use the hands free microphone without feeling like you are going to swallow it? I have been trying to use the microphone and have found it rather difficult. In order to pick up my voice, it needs to be so close to my mouth that it is rather uncomfortable. If anyone has a solution to this, I'd be happy to hear it.

I was able to fix the hands free microphone problem. Apparently, the switch wasn't completely turned on. I still would like to explore having multiple hand held microphones throughout the room.

[Comments \(1\)](#)

### **Collaboration** ([permalink](#)) -[edithistorydelete](#)

Created on Tuesday, 01/30/2007 4:41 PM by [William Klein](#)

Updated on Tuesday, 01/30/2007 4:41 PM by [William Klein](#)

I tried something today in my writing classes that were interesting. At the beginning of the semester I give students style worksheets that help them focus on writing mechanics, such as diction, grammar, and so on. The worksheets actually do several things: they help students practice with rhetorical concepts of style (reduce wordiness, avoid misplaced modifiers, etc.), but they also get students to consciously parse sentences and to think critically about their revisions. The critical thinking goal is the most important to my mind because that can extend to so many other aspects of writing. In the past, I've gone over the worksheets in class and ask them to explain their revision decisions, and then take their neighbor's paper home and revise it again. I did this in my 11:00 class in SSB 102.

But at 2:00 in SSB 449, we were able to get into small groups and go over worksheet sentences 2 and 3 at a time. This got more of them involved in explaining their revisions than in my previous practice. They were actively learning using the rhetorical concepts we discussed in the previous class, and they were practicing their parsing skills. I felt this group was much better prepared to do the second round of revision than the first. I'll let you know if I see a difference.

[Comments](#)

### **How this Room Can Make us Better** ([permalink](#)) -[edithistorydelete](#)

Created on Sunday, 01/28/2007 8:12 AM by [BUS Faculty](#)

Updated on Sunday, 01/28/2007 8:12 AM by [BUS Faculty](#)

<http://www.google.com/search?sourceid=navclient&aq=t&ie=UTF-8&rls=TSHA,TSHA:2005-45,TSHA:en&q=Innovative+Classrooms>

The link above is to a Google search page for Innovative Classrooms. Like others teaching in the room, I was caught a little off-guard by the opportunity to teach in a classroom with so many opportunities. I have formulated a few ideas for uses and projects, but I have not yet tried them as I feel my way around tools and equipment that are brand new to me. Additionally, I am trying to find my audience (I teach Tu 4-6:30), and trying to see what part of this technology and space potential will best serve them with me as facilitator.

I have become convinced over the years that student centered learning is long-lasting, but that there is something in many of us that wants to test the negative edge of performance (just how little can I do and still get a good grade; I need a "blow-off" course or two, is this one of them?). There are some fears that this room, with all its wonderful freedoms and potentials might lead to students attempting a *coup*. These are minimized with our skills, but what can we do to plan effective and varietal activities that utilize the space efficiently? Sorry, have to go to Sunday Breakfast with the family.

[Comments \(1\)](#)

### **Northwest White Board & Image Capture** ([permalink](#)) -[edithistorydelete](#)

Created on Friday, 01/26/2007 4:23 PM by BUS Faculty

Updated on Wednesday, 02/07/2007 7:11 AM by BUS Faculty

When I used this whiteboard with the class set up in a roundtable discussion in Area A, those students near the TV and Projection Screen could not see the whiteboard. It is also mighty tiny for a brainstorming session. I wonder if it makes sense to take the picture on the West Wall near that whiteboard and switch the two, making the whiteboard larger (good if we could also add the brainstorming pad, or make it movable to that area.)

The scanner is great for visual work, capture the image and work from there, but as a text saving device (i.e., copying a print article to a jpg or gif or pdf file for storage and retrieval) it is not strong. I have used it to show what a newspaper stock listing looks like, but I had hoped to copy interesting articles into a storage file on MyGateway. It will store eight images for use seriatim, but will not store them as a single file. Once you are done with them in the class and turn off the image camera, the images are deleted from memory. If one wants to copy a three page article, such storage is one page at a time, unless I miss the point.

I tried to copy an 8 1/2 by 11 sheet using image capture device, and it does not read a full sheet. It is about 10 X10.

### **Assessment Ideas** ([permalink](#)) -[edithistorydelete](#)

Created on Friday, 01/26/2007 12:13 PM by [William Klein](#)

Folks,

I was talking to [NAME] and [NAME] yesterday about how to assess this room and its impact on teaching and learning and we came up with a few ideas that I'd like to throw out to all of you for comments and critique. I'm afraid I am a qualitative guy, and so my ideas for assessment are pointed in that direction. Any suggestions for gathering quantitative data are welcome.

- 1. Ongoing blogs** (one group oriented blog for teachers and one [that I know of] group oriented blog for students)
- 2. Observations: daily teaching journals** (will anyone volunteer? [NAME], you would be great at this!)
- 3. Roundtable at mid semester with teachers and students**
- 4. Daily record of hardware use**
- 5. End of semester surveys** (one of MyGateway that could be compared to other MyGateway surveys campus-wide, and one of the room itself)
- 6. Interviews with students and teachers.** What do you think?

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**SPAN2101-001-SS07 Blog** ([permalink](#)) -[edithistorydelete](#)

Created on Wednesday, 06/06/2007 4:56 PM by [\[NAME\]](#)

[NAME]'s Spanish 2101 course blogged about the room today, and we wanted to share their comments with everyone.

**Post on June 6 2007**

Created on Wednesday, 06/06/2007 10:02 AM by Stephanie

I think that this classroom helps students more than the typical classroom setup. The tables make group work more efficient by giving the student lots of space to work while maintaining the group aspect. It is much easier to move the small table and rolling chair than arranging desks and being squished together. The personal computers are a big help in this class especially because we can all work at our own pace. The sound quality in this room is a lot better than the regular classrooms, when taking the listening part of the exams I can hear more in here than I ever could in the usual classroom. I especially like how there are two screens in the room, I no longer have to bend myself in all directions to see around the person in front of me and no matter where you are in the room

you can see.

### **Post on June 6 2007**

Created on Wednesday, 06/06/2007 10:02 AM by Robert

I hadn't taken a foreign language at UMSL prior to spanish 2101 this summer, I found the use of technology outstanding. I love having quizzes with the responders. It's so quick and easy to input your answer, it really made things fast, which I liked. The quia online homework was also pretty useful, it really kept me at it everyday. the only thing I didn't like about the quia is that i had to subscribe for 18 months, that was the only option. This class only lasts a month, for the summer, so I now have 17 months of quia that I probably won't use, I can see the benefit if you're planning to take three semesters of spanish back to back, but there are a lot of us students that don't do it that way. The classroom set up was arranged nicely, the grouping of the tables made it seem somewhat not so formal, I think that made it easier to relax and focus on the work. Working in groups always helps me, so I liked that aspect. Being forced to only speak in spanish in the classroom was also useful, it really makes you get focused. I'm not the biggest fan of the laptops but I do have to say they were very useful for the interaction during class because you had to follow along where the professor led to keep on track with the class. Over all the use of technology was fun and it worked well.

### **Post on June 6 2007**

Created on Wednesday, 06/06/2007 10:02 AM by Kathleen

I really like this classroom. The technology is incredible and very useful for both the instructor and students. Having computers everyday is very nice because it is a faster way to complete assignments and to get the results back from the instructor. I really like the setup of the room with the tables as opposed to having desks. With using tables there is more room to spread out material for class and also it is easier to get into groups with the other students and have discussions. Having the smart boards on both ends of the room make it easier for all students to be able to see what the instructor is presenting. Having a classroom like this that is equipped with so much new technology really is good for the instructor, causing them to learn how to use it all, as opposed to sticking to the traditional pen and paper, chalk and chalkboard way of teaching making class more exciting and in some ways more productive. All around this is a very useful classroom and I wish I could have one like it for each class I take.

### **Comments**

I agree that the tables are a lot better than having desks. We were able to move the tables around easliy allowing us to do group work and individual work.

Wednesday, 06/06/2007 10:04 AM by Lindsay

**Post on June 6 2007**

Created on Wednesday, 06/06/2007 10:01 AM by Toren

I love everything about this classroom! The wireless internet and ability for everyone to have their own laptop to work on is great! The projectors on either end of the room are really great because at least one can always be seen no matter where you are sitting, as well as the fact that we used them with one piece of information on one screen and another piece of info on another screen when only one person in a pair was supposed to be able to see a certain piece of info at a time, which made things very easy and interesting. The rolling tables and chairs make reorganizing the seating for different activities very easy, which saves more time for actual classwork! The sounds system in this room also works very well. One of my favorite aspects by far was the couch in the room. It's very nice to have a spot where you can sit and be comfortable while you are working. Why does everything have to be uncomfortable in a school setting? I don't think discomfort benefits learning at all, so the couch was a really great addition. The dry erase boards were about the only things that were rarely used. It's nice to have them there for the few occasions where someone may need to use one, but really with all the technology in this room, those instances are few and far between. More rooms like this across campus would be a fantastic addition to the learning experience as well as the campus as a whole!

**Post on June 6 2007**

Created on Wednesday, 06/06/2007 10:01 AM by Jean

I do like the big screens in the classroom where you can see from any spot. I like how the teacher can write on her computer and we can see her notes. We never use the TV and I wish we would. I would like to practice listening to Spanish tv. I also like clickers and watching videos on the screen together. I like moving the chairs and tables around, although they are a little unstable.

**Comments**

I also think that we need to use the TV's because we never once turned them on in two semesters.

Wednesday, 06/06/2007 10:07 AM by Lindsay

**Post on June 6 2007**

Created on Wednesday, 06/06/2007 10:01 AM by Marcella

I really enjoyed being in a class that was taught with so much technology. When I first had Spanish 1 with Susan it was a little confusing to have all of this technology thrown at you, but now I really do enjoy it and I feel like I have learned a lot more than I could have in a regular classroom because of all of the technology used. I really like using the clickers for the in class quizes instead of writing things down on paper. I liked program because you could go online and check your grades and print off the quizes so you could study them. I also like

the workbook being online because it made the homework a little more interesting and i liked it how you could see the answers after you submitted it to see why you did something wrong. i also enjoyed this classroom very much. i thought it was very comfortable and i loved it that everyone got their own personal computer, although that could be distracting at times. i think that the two screens in the classroom were great so that people could what Susan had up on the boards from wherever they were sitting. Technology in the classroom is a great thing that really helps with the learning especially of a new language.

### **Post on June 6 2007**

Created on Wednesday, 06/06/2007 10:01 AM by William

Re-organizable tables and personal laptops make working in groups much easier, and clicker quizzes are good for making sure you know the material. I would suggest, however, using Apple IBooks instead of Dell PC laptops; I personally prefer PCs at home for being very programmable, but Macintoshes are better for simpler things like classwork, are more user-friendly for less technically inclined or outright technophobic students, and can use Microsoft Office.

### **Post on June 6 2007**

Created on Wednesday, 06/06/2007 10:00 AM by Jennifer

I do like the style of this classroom overall, because it is so different from what I am used to using. The computers and wireless internet make learning a bit easier. We can access mygateway from class or visit different Spanish websites for practice. Having the internet access makes doing research much simpler during class time, although it might also offer the temptation to do something other than classwork. The rolling tables make it easy to switch the groups that you are working with during class time, since the tables and chairs move so easily. However the triangle tables seem to be just a little bit top-heavy and tip over pretty easily. That seems to be the only real disadvantage. I like having the projector screens on both sides of the classroom, because then you are able to see the board clearly, no matter what part of the room you are sitting on. A traditional style classroom does have its own advantages as well, but it is nice to have a classroom that is just a little bit different for a change.

### **this room is great**

Created on Wednesday, 06/06/2007 10:00 AM by Adrienne

This is the most comfortable class that I have ever been in. I love that we have the choice to sit in either a comfortable rolling chair or a couch, because you are not worried about that hard seat that bothers you, or having to wrestle your books and materials to stay on the desk, because we have enough space on the desk to put all of our things. Having a laptop computer that we can take around the

room with us is also helpful, because when we want to show someone what we are looking at in another group that we have to move to, we can take our computers with us. They also are space savers, because the bulky computers usually take up so much room on the desk, that you still run into the problem of not being able to fit all of your class materials on it. I also love the projector screens. Usually, there are those people who sit in the back of the class, and are not able to see what is on the screen, or the board, but in this classroom, you have no choice but to see what is on the screen, and that is conducive to learning! Also, there really is no back of the class in this room, because the teacher's podium is in the middle, so she is able to reach out to all of the students equally, and not forget about anyone, because they sit quietly in the back of the class. This is a great idea, that I wish would carry onto all of my classes, I just wish that it would have come about sooner, maybe then I would have enjoyed going to my classes when I was a freshman. I'm sad that I might not get the chance to have another classroom set up like this, if this setup is not implemented this coming year. I think that it is a great idea, because I have had classes with computers before, and I feel like with a regular computer I play a lot of games while I am in class, because I am bored, and everything is so impersonal, because you do not sit in groups, so you have no one that you can discuss the class with, but this way, you can sit in a group, discuss class, and when it is time for a test, you can separate the desks, and go on about your business! Alright, those are my thoughts.

### **Post on June 6 2007**

Created on Wednesday, 06/06/2007 10:00 AM by Amanda

I would like to see more classrooms look like this. I appreciate the variety of technology that is available to the students such as laptops, two projector screens, a printer, and many other mediums. The aesthetics of the room are conducive to a comfortable and positive learning experience like that the room can become a large round table or transform to a traditional classroom layout. I would definitely feel like I was at a top level university if all my classrooms offered these amenities.

### **Comments**

I agree that the amenities were very convenient. I love the laptops as well as the tables, rolling chairs and couches. I also feel that this is a huge step up for UMSL and that if more class rooms were available like this, the entire university would be more appealing.

Wednesday, 06/06/2007 10:04 AM by Kelly

### **The Classroom Experience...**

Created on Wednesday, 06/06/2007 10:00 AM by Denise

This is my 2nd semester in this classroom, and every day, I like it more than the first. I feel that this classroom promotes a positive learning environment the second you walk in the door. No longer do we sit in a stark classroom, walls

white, with windows that make a classroom feel like prison. No longer are we confined to one, hard-seated desk. No longer do we stare at one chalkboard, with feet on tile floors. In this classroom, the mood is different. The warm walls and pictures, colorful carpet, and welcoming couches beg to be noticed. Students sit where they choose, at group tables or individual tables. Even the couches are available. Cushioned stools can be used for seats, laptop stations, or feet. When you walk in the room, you want to learn. The laptops have proved very very successful in this class. We often are in groups or participating in group discussions. It is very convenient to pick up the computer all your work is on, and take it with you to complete other work. The dual boards and screen make it easy to view what's being lectured on. The professor's workstation allows them to teach wherever he/she pleases. The technology and comfortability of this room does not compare to any other classroom I've ever been in. It is my hope that the university will take this into consideration, and create more classrooms such as these. I have thoroughly enjoyed my experience in this room. The only thing I see unnecessary in this class, are the red bookbag shelves. For one, there are not enough spaces for everyone in the class. And secondly, we don't use them anyway. We keep our bookbags next to our desks. The shelves are the only things in the classroom unused.

### **Post on June 6 2007**

Created on Wednesday, 06/06/2007 10:00 AM by Kelly

I really liked the class room. I felt that the laptops were a huge bonus and allowed flexibility to work in groups and move about the room. Having two overhead projection screens allowed everyone to be able to see and allowed the instructor to present more information. I liked that we were able to use clickers to take quizzes and hear audio without changing classrooms. I also liked having moveable tables as well as rolling chairs. I would not change much in the class room. I would maybe inform students before the class begins on the various purchases involved in using a class room like this. While none of the costs were outrageous, they were unexpected. Group work and presentations were much easier to do without technological problems and confusion. Last semester we tried to submit our PowerPoint presentations via MyGateway, and nearly half were never received. I would continue to use this format for classes and add more resources like this.

### **Post on June 6 2007**

Created on Wednesday, 06/06/2007 9:59 AM by Brandon

Having technology set up like it is in this classroom is really great because we are able to utilize the computers and move very easily. In language classes group work is very important and the laptops are much better than a desktop for getting into groups. Also, when giving presentations is very easy and takes a lot less time to start each one with the connector you can use. This allows for more time to do other activities. I also like being able to use the clickers for

quizes because it also takes less time. This class has also helped me utilize more of the communication tools on my gateway. Having a lot of posts on the discussion board helps with learning because you can see others work and compare it to yours. One other thing I like was turning things in on voice board and being able to listen to instructor comments as well as see them written. (this helps in language classes) Overall I enjoyed working in this classroom and thing that for certain classes it is very beneficial.

### **Post on June 6 2007**

Created on Wednesday, 06/06/2007 9:59 AM by Brooke

I wish I could have all my classes in 449 because it allows me to stay on top of my assignments on mygateway. I think that with the wireless internet and other accademic websites it helps to get another perspective to learning. I feel that this classrom is also very comfortable. We are able to move around in groups and spread out. When I found out that we were having this classroom for the summer, I was excited because I knew that it would be comfortable for 3 hours of class. I think that a lot more classes should have the similar setup.I know in this class I have never seen students go to sleep like I have other classrooms. Everyone can fit comfortably into the chair and desks, but in this room people are more comfortable.

### **Interactive Classroom**

Created on Wednesday, 06/06/2007 9:59 AM by Meghan

This classroom is definately my favorite classroom so far in taking classes at UMSL. It has more than enough room for a regular size class, which gives people space to learn and not feel overly crowded, yet also not feel as though the professor is out of reach. I love the moving desks and chairs. Having comfortable seating is a nice change from what we are all used to and the mobile tables makes group projects and activities that much easier because there isn't screeching and banging to be heard. This whole classroom seems to be an attempt to just make learning easier, for the students and professor. I personally love to have an individual laptop than can be connected to the big screen as well as be connected to the internet and print. So in conclusion i would strongly suggest that more of these classrooms are made because i'm grateful i got to experience such a relaxed yet learning inhanced atmosphere.

Submitted with permission of Bill Klein, University of Missouri - St. Louis  
ELIXR Story Author  
May, 2009