

Developer Notebook – Entry #6

The final piece to any great work is usually done retrospectively. While I am by no means saying that my Haiku online course “Crewes’ AP Chemistry” is a great work, I will end this experience looking back on the successes and failures of my development choices. This experience has been extremely rewarding for me as I now can relate how much time and effort setting up even a limited online learning environment can be. The experience was well worth the effort.

My first suggestion for online development is to make sure that the course you are setting up has a fit in the online community. I don’t think that AP Chemistry was a good choice for development of a hybrid online course. Since this was a new prep for me this year, it was all I could do just to refresh the memory banks and come up with presentation material for the class. I had very little time or desire to develop new online activities to utilize in the class. Without immediate 1 to 1 computing for our students, signing out a computer lab, packing up all our stuff and hiking across the building wasted time that, I felt, could have been used to solve more problems in preparation for the “test”. The AP Chemistry course is all about the “test” at the end of the year. It’s about learning how to manipulate numbers, constants, equations and concepts to achieve a standardized level of competency. It’s not necessarily about the *journey* that an interactive, online experience has to offer.

Sometimes it is necessary to play with the applications that you wish to use in an online course. Some work out, and some turn out to be a less than pleasurable experience that ended up to be a waste of time. I found myself hesitant to introduce new applications for fear of wasting valuable “test” preparation time.

My Earth Science class would have been a better fit for this type of environment. It is not as challenging for the students, so they can take the time to learn new programs and then collaborate on their learning in a rich and meaningful ways. There are also so much more usable media concerning Earth Science than AP Chemistry. This allows much more diversity in scope and application of Earth Science over AP Chemistry.

I feel that the Haiku LMS was a success, overall. The web page based browsing was easy to navigate, and the program was fairly easy to learn. I loved the calendar to keep track of homework, assessments, due dates, and my students liked the fact that if they missed a day, everything was right there on the calendar. The ability to import and embed different programs and applications made it kind of fun to play around. The discussion forums were well put together, easy to set up and use, and displayed the discussion results very well. The independent communication option was nice, but my students preferred to use our school email and, of course, text me with their smart phones. Some of my students also mentioned that they really liked the additional videos (Kahn Academy) that I posted online, with small surveys associated with the material, posted underneath. It is nice to be able to incorporate UDL practices to aid in student learning that have already been made for you to use free of charge.

The aspect of the Haiku LMS that I enjoyed the most was the ability to extend my teaching day. I could spend class time discussing difficult topics, showing solutions to difficult problems, offering help to those that needed it when they worked on their problems, and then they could go home and take their assessments online and receive immediate feedback on their answers. They could turn in assignments electronically, and I could grade and return them electronically as well. The extra time they gave me outside of class was well worth the effort of setting the assessments up for them. The great thing about the online assessments is that I used questions from previous AP

Tests and AP Test Prep books. They were practicing AP questions while learning the material at the same time. As a bonus, Haiku would grade, score and tabulate the results for all my assessments, practices, and warm-ups for me. That is so cool!

So as we reach the end of this course, I have to reflect about the use of the LMS in my classroom environment. Is this something that I want to try to incorporate into all my classes? That would be a resounding, yes. I am looking forward to introducing it next year and I already have some great ideas for my Earth Science and Physics classes as well.