

Creating the Online Learning Environment: Designing Essential Interactions for the Online Course

A fully online class is not a website for managing assignments, grades, and course content. While you will do all of these things in your course, the course on the whole should be an interactive learning community. To ensure this happens, it is necessary to intentionally plan for three kinds of interaction – student-content, student-student, and student-instructor. When well balanced, these interactions generate a productive and satisfying learning environment, one in which students stay engaged, meet course goals, and feel like part of a larger class community.



Student-Content Interactions (S-C) require students to engage with course content in ways that go beyond reading, viewing, and listening. These activities require students to also apply the content in meaningful ways such as processing a data set, analyzing a case, mapping the relationships within specific conceptual frameworks, and so forth.

Student-Student Interactions (S-S) require students to engage with each other over the content. These activities often include discussions, blogs, peer feedback, and group work.

Student-Instructor Interactions (S-I) afford students the opportunity to receive expert instruction and feedback from the instructor. These interactions can be directed toward the whole class, small groups, or individual students and may include students responding to mini-lectures and reflecting on feedback provided by the instructor on tests, assignments, and projects.

In the example below, you will see that the instructor has intentionally planned the three kinds of interactions with an eye toward ensuring that students engage with the content beyond reading and viewing. Note how there is good balance of individual work, team work, and expert guidance from the instructor. Also note how each of these activities support attainment of the identified course goal.

Module Information	Student-Content (S-C) Interaction	Student-Student (S-S) Interaction	Student-Instructor (S-I) Interaction
<p>Related course goal:</p> <p>Apply appropriate instructional frameworks to support student progress in reading.</p> <p>Content for the Module:</p> <p>*Read the chapters on Whole Language Processes and Phonics Based Instruction.</p> <p>*View the video samples of both instructional models.</p> <p>*Review the position statements on the International Literacy Association website.</p>	<p>*Write a journal entry explaining which instructional method is better for support reading development in the primary grades. Justify your response using the readings and video samples from this module. Note any complicating factors. Generate two questions that arise from the complexity of considering each as best practice.</p> <p>*Write a position statement on the benefits and drawbacks of these two instructional methods.</p> <p>*Prepare and teach a lesson(s) utilizing one or both of the methods with your students.</p> <p>*Write an analysis of your teaching using the key concepts and expectations of the instructional method as a guide.</p>	<p>*Review and discuss the brief teaching scenario provided to determine which one of the instructional choices is the best recommendation for the teacher. Support your answer with evidence from the module readings and videos along with your own teaching experiences.</p> <p>*Provide feedback on your peer's position statement. Refer to the key tenets and processes of the methods in your analysis.</p>	<p>*Mini-lecture and asynchronous commenting forum.</p> <p>*Video feedback provided to the whole class after the discussion.</p> <p>*Individual comments in student journals.</p> <p>*Feedback on lesson plans.</p> <p>*Feedback on teaching analysis assignment.</p>