

The Back Channel to a Virtual Jigsaw

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The virtual jigsaw strategy can be a powerful method to use when presenting or analyzing narrative materials. By using this approach, the teacher can cover large amounts of material in less time with greater participant comprehension and involvement. The method requires each person in the group to read a different section of the content prior to a class session or during and then share out to other members of the group on what they have learned on a back channel.

To use the virtual jigsaw the teacher or presenter would setup a backchannel using [Today'sMeet](#) or Google Moderator. The link to the backchannel would be established on a reservoir learning site like a wiki or blog. The reading materials for the activity would also be posted and numbered accordingly.

For example, in some of the workshops I have presented on the elaborative learning environment I have focused on the idea of changing classroom learning spaces to meet the learning needs of students in the 21st Century. An article that I use to establish a method for the rearrangement of learning spaces is entitled, "[Campfires in Cyberspace: Primordial Metaphors for Learning in the 21st Century by David D. Thornburg, Ph.D.](#)" Prior to the workshop I break down the article into four different reading assignments and post these assignments on the workshop wiki. During the workshop I demonstrate how to use a virtual jigsaw using a technology tool like a backchannel.

The purpose of this demonstration provides participants with two levels of technology integration. First it provides the participants with information on how learning spaces can be developed to accommodate the elaborative classroom, and secondly it provides an example on how co-creating methods can be used to curate information from a whole group while reading parts of an article using a back channel. The steps used in a virtual jigsaw have been posted below.

1. A back channel is set up for the class or workshop using one of the following response tools, Today'sMeet or Google moderator.
2. The material is divided into parts and numbered. The material is then posted in pdf format on a reservoir learning site. If the virtual groups are composed of four members, then the material is divided into four equal parts. ([See Example](#))
3. The group members are numbered off and each one is assigned the section that corresponds to his/her number. (Please note that these assignments can also be made outside of the classroom by hashtag notifications of students through twitter.)
4. The teacher establishes a timeframe during which each participant is to read his/her assigned section. (Five minutes is probably plenty.)

5. After reading, each member then post their comments on the backchannel according to the underlying predefined questions associated with the article or just by sharing their posted thoughts. It is important to let the participants know that posting to a backchannel has limited number of words that can be used in a response. For example Today'sMeet is limited to 140 Characters in a response. The limitation to the number of characters used in a response also helps teach the importance of the use of paraphrasing and summarizing as a teaching strategy.
6. After all group members have finished, the presenter should provide some time for large group discussion as information is viewed on a projection system to the whole class or session. It is important that each participating members response is read to the whole group in case the group needs clarification.

Jigsaw Activity Example

PART ONE LEARNING SPACES: "The Facilitation of Learning Spaces"

Overview: In an elaborative learning environment "classroom spaces," are created in ways that students are at the center of knowledge obtainment. These learning spaces are linked to the process of engaged activities as students are asked to perform authentic task."

Activity One: Facilitated Learning

Directions

1. Number off one to four.
2. Once you have been given your topic number you have three minutes to respond to your assigned topic on the back channel.
3. To Answer the question assigned to your topic select the [Back Channel Link to Today's Meet](#)
4. Please monitor other response as you will be asked to provide feedback on one or all of the four questions listed above.

Topic One: "[The Campfire](#)"

Question One: In a facilitated classroom the campfire can be compared to learning in what ways?

Topic Two: "[The Watering Hole](#)"

Question Two: In a facilitated classroom how is the watering hole being compared to a part of a lesson?

Topic Three: "[The Cave](#)"

Question Three: In a facilitated classroom what part of a students learning is compared to a cave?

Topic Four: "[Life](#)"

Question Four: What role is directly associated with Life as it is applied to classroom learning?

Resources

- [Campfires in Cyberspace: Primordial Metaphors for Learning in the 21st Century](#) by David D. Thornburg, Ph.D.
- [TodaysMeet](#) as Elaborative Learning Tool
- [TodaysMeet Direct Link](#)

Today's Meet is used as an interactive tool to demonstrate how students can ask questions digitally in a forum for the class to view. [Here are a few ways we've used it in the classroom.](#)