

## OLTD 504 ePortfolio Reflection #2

### OLTD Program Learning Outcome(s):

- Be familiar with common terms, definitions and elements related to Learning Management Systems (LMS) and non-LMS environments.
- Demonstrate basic competency with design and implementation within a variety of LMS and non-LMS environments and tools.
- Create assessment and evaluation methods/tools most suitable to the strengths and challenges of LMS and non-LMS environments.
- Integration of current cognitive learning and brain-based learning theory.

### Evidence:

Non-LMS Toolkit

<https://jeffoltd.weebly.com/my-learning-journey-blog/non-lms-toolkit>



### Reflection:

The piece of evidence that I have chosen to support these learning outcomes is the Non-LMS Toolkit assignment that I completed during the week of March 25 to April 1, 2018 that I completed using Google Docs and Weebly. In this assignment we were asked to research, test, and compile a comprehensive list of online tools that could be used in combination as a viable alternative to a robust LMS. Our toolkit had to be linked to our philosophy of education and include tools that could be used to (1) build community, (2) provide content, interactivity, and organization, and (3) handle assessment as, and for learning. I completed my assignment my writing my content in Google Docs, then using that content and images to create a well organized and visually appealing blog post on my OLTD Weebly site.

In creating this assignment, I learned about how I could use a set of online tools instead of a pre-packaged, potentially limiting LMS to organize and teach an online course. It made me consider the idea that, although learning management software is a very convenient method to host an online course, sometimes the one-size-fits-all solution that they provide is not the best way to tailor your course to accomplish your goals or meet the needs of your and students. This assignment also provided me with the opportunity to reflect on my philosophy of education and how to select online learning tools that align with and support it. The theory that I chose to base my toolkit around was the Community of Inquiry Framework and its three presences: social, teaching, and cognitive. After taking the first three courses in the OLTD program I have realized the importance of the social presence in creating an effective online learning environment. I feel that without the social/community aspect, online programs can feel very distant and learners can become disconnected and lack motivation. Non-LMS tools such as Google Plus and Zoom are far superior to any alternatives provided within any single LMS for building this social presence in my opinion. This assignment also allowed me to become more adept at designing an effective and aesthetically pleasing web page. I think that the greatest strength of this piece of evidence is that I was able to learn something that I can use in my teaching practice immediately. I have already used most of these tools in my classroom in the past but had not put much thought into how they can be used as a collective group to replace my reliance on LMS.

Using entirely non-LMS tools to create an online course is something that I thought was very inefficient and disorganized when I started this course. However, after completing this assignment, I now see the benefits of this approach. I think that if I, or any educator, become too reliant on any one particular pre-packaged learning management software to run my courses I am (1) limiting the learning experiences for my students, and (2) setting myself up for problems if I am no longer able to use that software. For example, I use Schoology to run my courses, but it is very possible that in the future I will not be able to do so because of student data privacy concerns or the Schoology requiring a paid subscription to use their LMS. I think that an online educator is actually better off in many ways developing their own website and using a combination of tools that allow them and their students more freedom than the, at times, restrictive nature of LMS. One particular aspect of LMS that can be very restricting is the gradebook feature. They often do not allow teachers to utilize grading approaches other than the standard numerical approach, which many districts are encouraging teachers to move away from. The best solution to this problem might be to create your own gradebook that allows you to assess students in ways that better align to your personal teaching philosophy and principals. I could implement these learning outcomes into my own practice by designing learning experiences that make more use of these tools. I think a common attribute of these tools is that they allow students and teachers to collaborate very easily which is a principal that I would like to incorporate into my classroom more often.