

# 10 Cool Ways to Engage With Blackboard Collaborate

## GETTING ENGAGED: HOW TO REACH TODAY'S STUDENTS

There's nothing new about the connection between student engagement and student learning. Educators have been making it for years. What's changed is the role that technology plays in the classroom. What's changed is the emergence of virtual learning, both real-time and self-paced. And what's changed is the students. They're digital natives - tech savvy, connected, always on - who'll turn learning off if it's not deeply engaging.

### How do you get to these digital natives?

Over the years, Blackboard has put a lot of thought into this question, and the answer we've come up with is Blackboard Collaborate. The only live, online learning platform built specifically for education, Blackboard Collaborate helps educators, whether in K-12 or higher education - reach today's students through a platform that combines web conferencing, instant messaging, and voice authoring to help make learning more interactive, immediate, personal, and real.

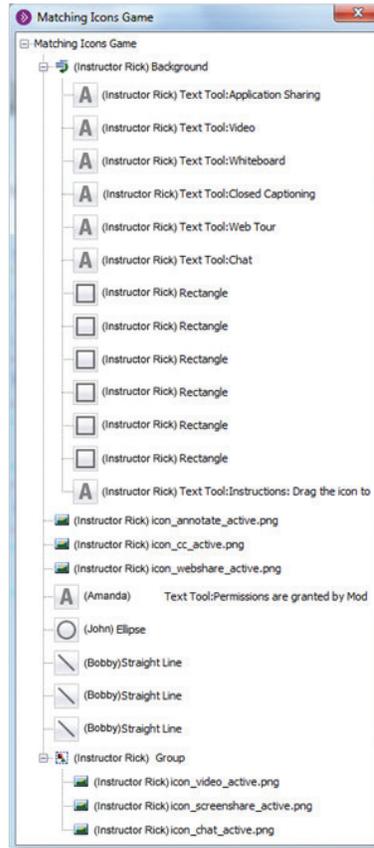
With all the engaging capabilities in Blackboard Collaborate, it was a bit difficult to whittle down the list to the "Top Ten". So we'll leave it at "Ten Cool Ways to Engage with Blackboard Collaborate", with a note that there are plenty more where these came from.



School districts across the state of North Carolina using collaboration technologies have seen “astounding results” in student achievement, regardless of subject, according to Dr. Mack McCary, Chief Academic Officer of the Guilford County Schools:

- ▶ Science students went from being 20% proficient in the 2007- 2008 year to over 80% proficient in 2008-2009, due largely to replacing almost all multiple choice testing with more authentic projects and writing assessments, highly engaging lessons, and involving students in diagnosing their own learning progress.
- ▶ Students in two schools in a first year US History class all scored 100% despite some only having 0.3-0.5% chance of scoring proficient according to EVAAS data. This teacher framed learning as a team sport, and saw increased student motivation and initiative to assist other students in learning so they could beat the district average.
- ▶ Algebra 1 students scored 100% proficient and almost all Geometry students scored 100%, a dramatic turnaround from the previous year.
- ▶ Dramatic increase in students willing to stay for tutoring, as the school utilized benchmark and other formative assessments to customize tutoring for what each student needed to work on.

*“I thought you might appreciate how much Blackboard Collaborate has meant to the principals and teachers,” writes Dr. McCary. “Our teachers have achieved amazing student achievement results.”*



*The Object Explorer allows you to easily take an inventory of whiteboard objects and perform operations on them.*

## 1 Whiteboards Built for Engagement

Today’s classroom looks a lot different than it did a generation ago. Remember when the teacher would pick a student to clean the chalkboard and erasers at the end of the day? Or when the professor gave a “chalk talk.” That chalkboard was the visual focus of the room, where all the important points were made and insights summarized. Now the chalkboard has gone digital, and the classroom focus is the electronic or virtual whiteboard. (No more dusty erasers to pound at the end of the day.)

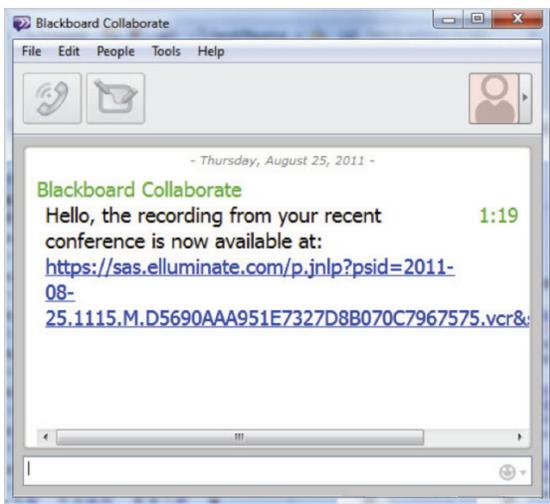
Blackboard Collaborate’s virtual whiteboards, part of both its web conferencing and instant messaging capabilities, provide opportunities for instructors and students to engage in more ways than any other virtual whiteboard on the market. The Black-

board Collaborate whiteboard lets you do anything you can do on a traditional chalkboard or interactive whiteboards like Promethean® (and, in fact, integrates with them), and takes the engagement potential well beyond. Blackboard Collaborate’s whiteboard is multi-user, not just for stand-up presenters. Instructors decide who can access the whiteboard at any given time and, with a single click of the Object Explorer, can even tell who did what. With the Object Explorer, you can also edit, group, and send objects to the background.

Blackboard Collaborate’s whiteboard is object oriented: you can easily add common image files such as .png, .jpg or.gif by simply dragging and dropping them on to the whiteboard. A wide range of annotation tools allow students and/or instructors to add text and drawings of any color using the color wheel. Instructors can include clickable web links on the whiteboard that are even usable when a session recording is played back. With so many interactive capabilities, the Blackboard Collaborate™ whiteboard is especially ideal for visual and kinesthetic learners.

## 2 Web Conferencing Recordings in an Instant Message

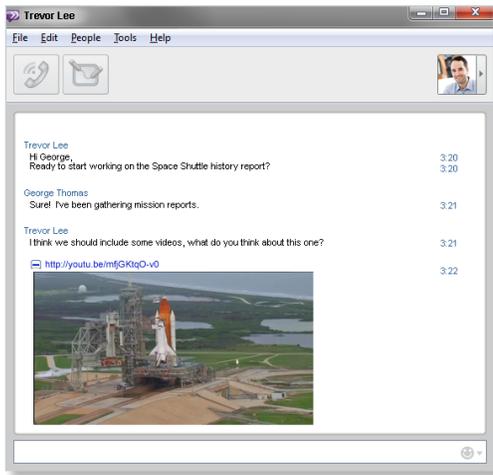
For digital natives, texting has become the standard way to communicate, so we've made Blackboard Collaborate enterprise instant messaging (Bb IM) an integral part of Blackboard Collaborate. If you're a Blackboard Collaborate user, you may already know that, while in Bb IM, you can launch directly into web conferencing with the click of a button. If you decide to record your web conferencing session, the recording link automatically appears in your chat window when the session ends. No more having to fetch a recording from a database between tutoring sessions, impromptu meetings, student study sessions or career advisement meetings. More importantly, participants immediately receive a record of their interaction for later review, without having to ask or search for it. If your Bb IM is set to save chat logs, you'll always have that recording readily available within Bb IM. And those recording links can be bookmarked for access outside of Bb IM, as well.



The web conferencing recording link automatically appears in your chat window

*The new collaborative tools from Blackboard Collaborate will have us imagining anew: in what new ways can we learn. One day very soon, a student will enter a classroom, interact with the instructor, peers, and break out into small groups to complete a project. For that student, the experience will be like every learning experience before it in every respect but one. The student will be in an online classroom using Blackboard Collaborate.*

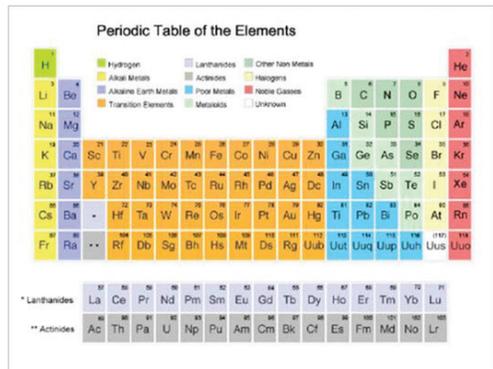
Terry Pollard  
eLearning Specialist, Mississippi  
Board of Community Colleges



Engage your students with YouTube videos by simply entering the link in the chat window where the actual video plays.

### 3 Instant Videos, Directly in Chat

If today's digital natives communicate through texting, they often view the world through YouTube. With Blackboard Collaborate enterprise instant messaging, you can engage your students with videos by simply entering the link in the chat window. When this is done, you get more than just a clickable link, you get the actual video. No need to open a new browser tab or clutter your desktop with yet another application. A follow-up discussion can easily continue via chat in this same virtual place. Bb IM has more ways to engage than ever before, and simplifies the online chat communication by keeping the important content - chat and video - all in one place.



Educationally-focused whiteboard backgrounds, like this Periodic Table, are available for moderators to load onto the whiteboard.

### 4 Customize Your Clipart Library

Blackboard Collaborate makes the simple things easy, and the complex things possible. The custom clipart library in Blackboard Collaborate's web conferencing allows you to keep all your commonly-used images readily available, inside your whiteboard tool set, for quick and easy access during your sessions. Once added to your clipart library, your custom clipart (which can include standard clipart edited on the whiteboard) will be accessible in every future session whether you're a participant or a moderator. Additionally, anytime you have whiteboard permission, you have access to your custom clipart library. In Blackboard Collaborate, you can also automatically load a custom education-oriented background that only you, as the moderator, have access to - flexibility and moderator control at its best. **This quick tutorial illustrates the process.**

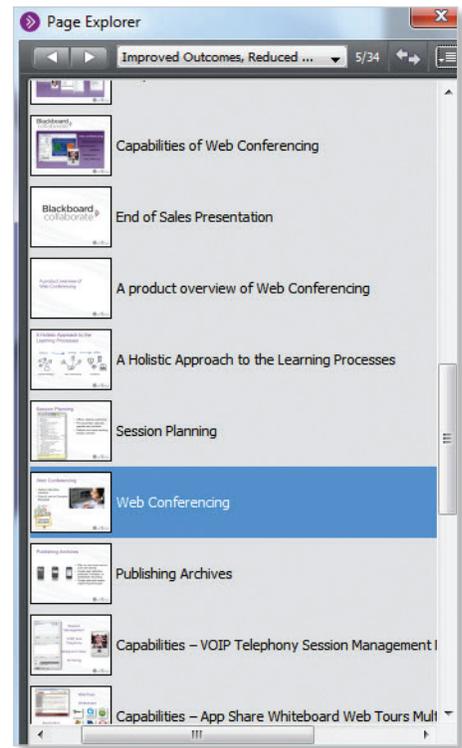


Blackboard Collaborate's Whiteboard is used to present slides, or as a work area where you and other session attendees can display images, write, or draw. Common uses include presenting and marking up slides and images to emphasize important points, recording meeting ideas and action items, conducting academic exercises, and offering learning games in class. Whiteboards enable a high level of interactivity during online sessions. The object-oriented nature allows content to be added, moved, and edited by moderator or, if a moderator allows, any other participant. Whiteboards can be saved and reused in other web conferencing or Blackboard Collaborate enterprise instant messaging (Bb IM) sessions. They can also be saved to standard formats such as pdf for sharing outside of real-time collaborative sessions.



## 5 Insight into Student Activity with Page Explorer

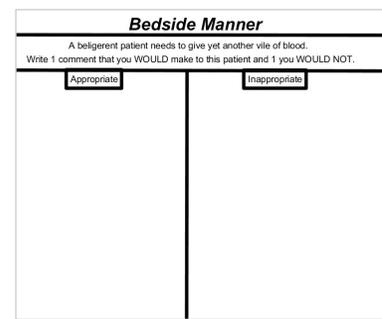
Blackboard Collaborate's web conferencing Page Explorer gives you a birds-eye view of content and interactivity across all the rooms - main and breakouts - open during a session, enabling you to easily facilitate a session and better engage your students. Page Explorer lets you see live thumbnail views of all whiteboard pages, in all rooms, letting you monitor the activity on ALL pages without having to navigate to those pages. If you've asked your students to collaborate on a page or to work individually on their own page, you can quickly browse the thumbnails to see if this is happening. You'll easily know if students are progressing or if they have stalled in the whiteboard activity and need you to jump in. If you're lucky enough to have multiple computer monitors, keeping tabs on your students is even easier. You can move Page Explorer to its own monitor, and have a screen fully devoted to the monitoring function - especially helpful if you're working with a large class with many different breakout sessions. To learn more check out the Page Explorer section in our [Moderator Guide](#).



Page Explorer allows moderators to rearrange pages and page groups, navigate to private page groups or page groups belonging to breakout rooms, edit the properties of multiple pages at once, or delete pages.

## 6 Preload Engaging Activities into Multiple Breakout Rooms

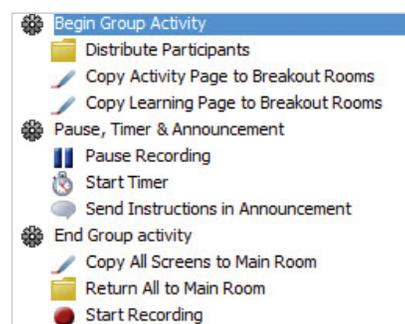
When Blackboard Collaborate web conferencing is used to its full potential, there is very little you can't do to engage students. The engagement potential is especially impressive when you preload content into breakout rooms for individual or small group exercises. In higher education, small group dynamics are perfect for handling intensely complex concepts. In a nursing program, for one example, courses could utilize various breakout rooms filled with a variety of learning modules and activities. For instance, "IV Push Breakout Room" could be loaded with a tutorial like [this video](#). Preload the "Nursing Journal Breakout Room" with quizzes and activities related to [relevant publications](#). Yet another breakout room could be created for brainstorming and could include an interactive whiteboard such as this Bedside Manner one.



Students can all contribute to a brainstorming session on Bedside Manner.

Let's Play Jeopardy!				
Biology	Ancient Climates	Archeology	Fossils	Geology
10	10	10	10	10
20	20	20	20	20
30	30	30	30	30

You can make sure that your students know the right questions to ask by setting up a Jeopardy session.



Blackboard Collaborate Plan outline for managing and preloading breakout room activity.

K-12 Individual Education Plans can be fulfilled with individualized lessons, activities, and tests, and, in general, classrooms can be made more lively and engaging by adding interactivity. In the earlier grades, younger students especially enjoy a chance to relax and play after all their hard work and serious learning. Virtual recess allows just that opportunity and preloading a variety of content into multiple breakout rooms is the perfect way to do just that. In one breakout room, Fitness Challenge is preloaded with [this website](#). In another room, Story Time has this interactive online children's book [The Message from Water](#). In the upper grades, students also benefit when interactivity is used alongside traditional modes of learning.

The potential for engagement, and for reaching students with different needs and learning styles, is tremendous when you preload different forms of interactive content in breakout rooms.

## 7 Breakout Room Activities Made Simple with Compound Actions in your Plan

Breakout rooms in Blackboard Collaborate's web conferencing empower groups to break off, work separately, then reconvene and share their work. Sounds simple enough, right? And, in Blackboard Collaborate, it truly is - especially when activities are pre-built into a session plan. Blackboard Collaborate Plan lets you package content and interactions for a live session in a single file. You can automate routine tasks, and trigger new activities with a single click. With Plan, you can focus on delivering your lesson and interacting and engaging with your students, not on the mechanics of loading and playing multimedia, loading files to transfer, etc.

Compound Actions in Plan makes it possible to organize complex activities - setting up multiple breakout room, assigning students to those rooms, selecting pages to be used in the breakout rooms - into one task set that can be put into action with the click of a button. In the illustration here, each of the gray cogs represents a Compound Action built for one-click execution. Handy? You bet! Helpful, too, in letting you stay focused on your content and teaching with variety and interactivity to hold the attention of your students instead of going through the mechanics of creating, moving, loading and managing breakout rooms and associated activities.

## 8 Add Closed Captioning to Web Conferencing Recordings

With Blackboard Collaborate Publish, you can add closed captioning to a web conferencing recording if it was not captioned during the live session. This will let you engage a student who is deaf or hard of hearing even if you have no budget for a professional captionist or staff member who can take live captions. To add closed captioning, you simply conduct your live web

conferencing session as usual. Afterward, in Publish, you can convert your recording to a standard video file format (such as .wav, .mov or .swf), then use a free shareware subtitle applications like Jubler, which lets you create subtitles that are synchronized with your video file and easily merge your closed captioning. For a variety of scenarios and step by step instructions download our guide, Adding Closed Captioning to a Publish Video File Post Session [here](#).

## 9 Give Your Tests a Voice of Their Own

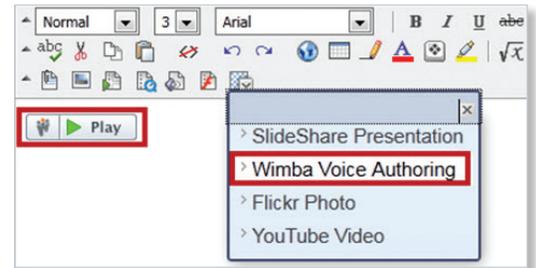
Blackboard Collaborate voice authoring capabilities make the learning process more interesting and engaging, adding a human, personal touch, even when interaction is not “live”. With voice authoring, you can add voice instructions, annotation and commentary to course pages and web sites, and provide students with personalized coaching, feedback, and assessments. Blackboard Collaborate has five voice authoring tools: voice email, voice podcaster, voice presentation, voice board and voice recorder.

Voice recorder is especially useful when combined with Blackboard tests created in Blackboard Learn, Blackboard’s learning management system, which is tightly integrated with Blackboard Collaborate. With voice recorder, you can embed voice questions, answers and comments into tests. Anywhere in Blackboard Learn that you have access to your WYSIWYG text editor you have access to Blackboard Collaborate’s voice recorder. That voice recorder is even available when you are building a Bb Learn test. **Here is an example of a voice embedded test question in Blackboard Learn.**

As you create your tests in Blackboard Learn, you can build things in that engage students in ever more imaginative ways, like adding voice questions, and/or asking for voice responses, and providing verbal comments. Engaging students with your voice lets you:

- ▶ **verbally explain complex ideas**
- ▶ **facilitate language study:**
  - **test pronunciation, rhythm, stress, emphasis and other important verbal details**
  - **simultaneously speak and read language tests**
- ▶ **provide a multi-sensory, active approach to testing**

When Blackboard Collaborate voice authoring joins Blackboard Learn, you can think outside the virtual box when you create your tests. For additional hints on how voice can be added to your non-language based courses, please visit Blackboard Collaborate podcasts that showcase how **higher education** and **K12** courses can utilize voice authoring.

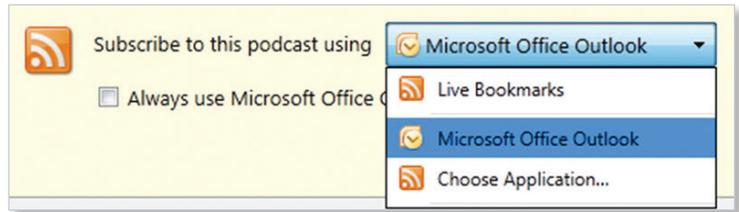


Voice recorder is available in Blackboard Learn’s WYSIWYG editor, enabling you to add voice instruction and responses to tests, assignments and more.



In 2008, Georgia Perimeter College History instructor Angela Gilleland noticed that students in her online courses weren't completing assignments as often as those in her face-to-face courses. In an attempt to solve this problem, Gilleland started using Blackboard Collaborate to provide audible instructions and directions about assignments and immediately noticed that her vocal content improved student achievement. In fact, student achievement also improved in her face-to-face courses when she added supplemental vocal information online when she wanted to clarify important points.

"You can use Blackboard Collaborate to verbally reiterate any assignment or procedure that students need to know about," Gilleland says. She found that discussion grades went up by an average of 8% and essay grades went up 13 points on average. The extra clarification, according to the Gilleland, allows students to revisit important points as often as necessary. "It took no time at all. Using Blackboard Collaborate was the easiest thing I could have done for my class and it was also the most beneficial. It was just a matter of recording myself. That's it," she says. "I found the stats on non-participating students for my discussion and essay assignments before and after implementing Blackboard Collaborate and WOW!"



RSS feed brings voice podcasts to the listener instead of requiring LMS access and login.

## 10 Voice Podcasts Delivered to Your Inbox or iTunes Library

Blackboard Collaborate's voice podcaster makes creating and accessing podcasts easier than ever. With Blackboard Collaborate voice authoring, you can subscribe to voice podcasts via an RSS Feed or your iTunes library. Anyone who has been invited to view one of your podcasts can get all future related podcasts delivered to them via an email notification, and the podcasts can be found on one webpage using the same URL every time. Your subscribers can also add the feed to their iTunes library so that each time a new podcast is added, it will appear automatically. This makes becoming a mobile instructor and meeting the needs of today's mobile learners incredibly convenient.

## Getting Your Students Engaged with Blackboard Collaborate:

Whether it's web conferencing, instant messaging, or voice authoring capabilities, Blackboard Collaborate makes it easier than ever to create a vibrant and engaging learning environment. That's why thousands of educators in higher education and in K-12 are using Blackboard Collaborate to get their students engaged in a lot of very cool ways. The result? Students who are more engaged. And as every educator knows, students who are more engaged are shown to perform better academically. How cool is that?

To learn more about how you can reach your academic, administrative, and financial goals through more interactive and cost-effective collaboration, visit [blackboardcollaborate.com](http://blackboardcollaborate.com), contact us at [collaboratesales@blackboard.com](mailto:collaboratesales@blackboard.com), or try our solution free for 30 days at [bbc collaborate.com/try](http://bbc collaborate.com/try).