How to facilitate collaborative learning in higher education with MindMeister and G Suite

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SUCCESS STORY

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WEBSITE
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AT A GLANCE

- Lecturers can facilitate learning through engaging collaborative lessons

- Mind maps are prepared before sessions and edited by students in real-time

- Students create collective team presentations using Google Slides

- Revision mind maps can be created, with links to Google Docs embedded

> " Using the visual learning technique of mind mapping for note-taking, my students are engaged and get the most out of our class discussions. "

With a background in elementary and special educa- tion, Nancy Morris has been an instructor and teacher trainer at the School of Education at Gannon University in Pennsylvania for over five years. Having developed a love for using technology to facilitate learning, Nancy shared with us how MindMeister and G Suite have assisted her in training future classroom teachers.

Disseminating Knowledge vs. Facilitating Learning

Throughout her career in teaching and lecturing, Nancy found that instead of facilitating learning, through en- gaging classes, lecturers would simply take a "sage on the stage" approach to disseminating knowledge:

"Anyone who's worked in higher education will have watched as a professor talks to an auditorium of half-asleep students, reading from static PowerPoint slides," Nancy shared. "There is minimal interaction, engage- ment, and metacognitive strategies occurring. What's more, the students are most probably not learning."

"When information is presented in a linear way, as it often is in a PowerPoint with headings and subheadings, we lose the opportunity to categorize, make connections, synthesize and re- organize information in our heads."

As a result, instead of asking students to simply note down facts from a PowerPoint, Nancy looked for a means of helping students to learn, discuss and use their newly acquired knowledge in a more engaged way.

G Suite

Collaborative Lessons with G Suite & MindMeister

Nancy discovered a study from Farrand, Hussain, and Hennessey, claiming that mind mapping improved the long-term memory of students by 10%, and another study from Mento et al, claiming that mind mapping boosted creative thinking in student participants. As a result, Nancy decided to try mind mapping.

"My experience of using mind mapping in higher edu- cation reiterated the studies' findings. In comparison to noting down text from a slide, mind mapping makes the learning process more meaningful and memorable for students. Using the visual learning technique of mind mapping for note-taking, my students are engaged and able to get the most out of our class discussions."

"One way I love to use MindMeister is by preparing a mind map with pre-populated videos, links, or headings, and sharing the mind map with my students ahead of the session. Then, in class, we can discuss the resources in real time, in small groups or student pairs, and type notes and connections straight into the mind map."

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To turn the ideas generated in the mind maps into essays and presentations, Nancy's class use G Suite:

"I use G Suite in my classroom to enable students to complete collaborative activities," Nancy shares. "We use Google Docs to allow students to work collabora- tively on a class assignment within small groups, as each group's work and thoughts are captured on a single document that can then be referred to within a larger group discussion. We've also used Google Slides to allow students to create collaborative presentations, in which students write a couple of slides each, based on inde- pendent study, and together create a group presentation to provide in class."

With MindMeister, Google Docs and Google Slides

can be linked to directly from topics within a mind map, enabling students to use the mind maps for revision, later in the semester. Additionally, mind maps can be export- ed to Google Drive, to create backups on Drive, with all relevant documents attached.

The Result: Facilitating Engaging Learning

"From lectures, to collaboration, to more effective note taking, mind maps are a tool that are in my opinion cen- tral to improving instructional practices in the education sector. The role of a University Professor has moved on and we must now engage our students. Mind maps support this practice and, in my experience, are a perfect tool for students in the 21st Century classroom."

G Suite