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| Colorado Online @ |
| Technology Committee Recommendations: |
| Internal Messaging within D2L (2.2.4) & Accessibility Tools-ReadSpeaker (2.2.8) |

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## Introduction

The Technology Subcommittee will:

* Review the student experience, needs and pain points first (e.g., through Phase 1 student survey data and Phase 2 personas and maps), before considering administrative and/or local college needs; and then
* Make decisions and/or recommendations related to online course registration technologies, online teaching and learning technologies, technology support services and other technology-related issues. As the subcommittee makes these decisions and recommendations, it will prioritize optimizing, simplifying or streamlining the student experience and conditions for student success.

## Deliverable 2.2.4

**Recommend LMS configuration and integration to best meet project goals and orchestrate transition – internal messaging.**

## Recommendation

* *Option 1*: D2L internal messaging with forwarding available to external emails
* *Option 2*: External email with D2L internal messaging disabled

## Rationale

Option 1: D2L internal messaging with forwarding available to external emails

* Clicking on a name in the D2L course Classlist tool creates a new internal message addressed to the selected person.
* Students can check external email using the Office365 widget.
* The internal message goes to the person’s inbox in D2L. They can see a notification of the message in D2L and can open the message in D2L to read and reply.
* Messages can be forwarded to outside email accounts. The forwarded messages can’t be replied to because D2L blocks external emails. The person will need to reply to the message in their D2L inbox.
* When they reply to the internal message in D2L, it goes to the D2L inbox of the person receiving the internal message.
* Messages are retained in D2L (both sent and received) unless the user deletes the message.
* D2L Internal messages are not automatically deleted. CCCS instructor emails are subject to system data retention policies.

Option 2:  External email with D2L internal messaging disabled

* Clicking on a name in the D2L course Classlist tool creates a new external email addressed to the selected person.
* Students can check external email using the Office365 widget.
* The email will be addressed and sent to the recipient's college email account. They must access the college email account to read the message.
* When they reply to the email in the college email account, it will be sent to the receiver's college email account, not D2L.
* Initially sent messages will be available in D2L. All other communication will be stored in the individual email accounts.

## Factors to Consider

Option 1: D2L internal messaging with forwarding available to external emails

*Benefits*

* Separate communication channels separates course email and other institutional messages
* Messages+102 sorted by course automatically
* For instructors teaching at multiple institutions this provides a single point of communication.
* Easy to access when logged into D2L.
* A more streamlined way of integrating communication within D2L features. Quick Links to assignments, activities, checklists, content, and discussions can be embedded in messages – easy access for students and instructors to D2L material
* Keeps students in one place for course communications
* Provides users the choice of communication method – empowers users. External email is still an option
* Many of the colleges are already using this communication option
* Allows instructor a choice to select communication method with students
* Not subject to external spam messages

*Challenges*

* Attachment file size limitation 10 MB
* Email forwarded outside of D2L can’t be replied to since D2L does not accept outside emails
* Creates separate communication systems that can be confusing. Instructors may choose to have students send email through college email or through D2L email
* Quiz configurations can disable internal messaging if set by the instructor. This is not limited to the course the quiz is located but for all D2L internal messages for that student.
* No out-of-office message
* Need for instructors to clarify their preferred method of communication

*Assumptions:*

* D2L messaging can be set up to include course titles in all messages whether internal or external.

Option 2:  External email with D2L internal messaging disabled

*Benefits*

* Consolidated communication method. Single source drives all users to a single point of communication
* Out of office functionality
* Can reduce confusion by not having to access multiple communication systems
* Students can check e-mail within D2L using the Office 365 widget.  After the Office 365 email consolidation, instructors will be able to use the Office 365 widget.
* Encourages students, faculty and instructors to check their school email account.

*Challenges*

* A single default institutional email address will be used for communication.  May cause confusion for instructors teaching at multiple colleges.
* Because most of the colleges are using internal messaging this will be a major shift for most users.
* Each user would need to set up filter/rule to sort by courses once the title is included in the email
* Course communications combined with all other work emails.  The risk is that student communication will get lost
* Removes communication choice from users and forces the adoption of the selected method.
* There will be no notification of new messages in D2L.
* The initial communication can start in D2L with all further communication occurring externally, this method could cause confusion of where to check for communications with student/instructor.

*Assumptions:*

* Email can be set up to include course title in all messages whether internal or external.
* Default email goes to pay college

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## Next Steps

* Either option will create a significant change in instructor/student communication at multiple colleges. Past experiences indicates that a significant transition period would be needed in either case to allow instructors and students to prepare for the changes.
* A communication plan for students and employees needs to be developed.  The communication plan should include reaching out to multiple channels (e.g., e-mail, D2L announcement, presentation, social media, etc.) and multiple times.  Communication will start before faculty and instructors go on summer break.
* Training is recommended for all colleges.
* Some colleges will need to update their faculty training based on the decision.

## Deliverable 2.2.8

**Recommend LMS configuration and integration to best meet project goals and orchestrate transition – ReadSpeaker**

## Recommendation

To ensure a common student experience and promote web accessibility compliance, the workgroup recommends that ReadSpeaker be available to all colleges.

## Rationale

This will help ensure WCAG compliance, accessibility, and equity across all colleges. Additionally, we recommend the cost be supported by CCCS and not individual colleges. This is based on the configuration requirement that ReadSpeaker must be 'on' or 'off' at the top ORG level of the single instance of D2L. Failure to adopt at the system level will remove a critical tool that is currently used by several colleges to meet student accommodation requirements. By having ReadSpeaker embedded in D2L, students with text to speech needs can test from any location; therefore, eliminating the need for the student to come on campus to test.

## Factors to Consider

**Benefits**

All CCCS students would be able to access audio for D2L Quizzes, Content, Assignments, and Discussions. Makes D2L content more accessible for all students. This conforms with [W3C Web Accessibility Initiative  recommendations](https://www.w3.org/WAI/perspective-videos/speech/).

* Many students have special needs requests for audio versions of exams and assignments. This service would save many hours of manual processing. The Readspeaker audio tool will appear in all D2L quizzes.
* Students would be able to download the MP3 files of materials in the Content tool for offline listening.
* The ReadSpeaker Text aid tool can be used to read screens in D2L that are not read by the ReadSpeaker app. It can also be used for publishers and other websites by copying and pasting the text into the Text aid tool to be read aloud. The Text aid text editor allows students to hear text while they type it into the editor. The Text aid text editor can translate English to Spanish and vice versa.
* It contains foreign language options that are beneficial for the ESL student population. Especially for colleges that are a Hispanic serving institution.
* It provides students who have specific visual needs with options for various font types, sizes, and background color options.
* Cost/student decreases at higher FTE. Adopting systemwide in the single D2L instance is at the lowest price per student ($0.60/per student) with additional cost reductions for a multi-year contract.
* Failure to adopt can lead to legal liability for failing to provide accessible web content.
* Diversity Equity and Inclusion are central to CCCS students. ReadSpeaker reaches all students.
* ReadSpeaker aligns with Universal Design for Learning.

**Challenges**

* Cost (approximately $30,000/year)
* This service would have to be on for all colleges
* Potential requirements for an RFP or RFQ
* Potential conflict with outdated versions of SCORM items
* Outside of quizzes, content, assignments, and discussions, it doesn’t integrate with every D2L tool such as the announcements tool.

## Potential Impact / Effect on Other Decisions

* The availability of this accessibility tool could impact course design and development. Shifting this cost from individual colleges to CCCS may impact the fiscal models being considered.

## Required Resources

* Funding
* Sole Source provider documentation would be needed for a multi-year commitment.

## Next Steps

* Provide sole source justification to facilitate purchase without the need for an RFP.
* Create implementation and communication plan, including distribution of job aid or documentation of ReadSpeaker features and usage. Alternatively, this could be included in a common LOR or training shell.
* Consider additional tools such as Blackboard Ally or YuJa Panorama to further meet Universal Design and web accessibility needs. ReadSpeaker is one component of a more comprehensive process to promote and build accessibly for all students within the CCCS learning environment.