

## 1.6 The One About Online Tools

[00:00:00] **Mandy:** [00:00:00] Hi, Wayne and Becky, how are you today?

**Wayne:** [00:00:02] Hi guys.

**Becky:** [00:00:05] I'm good. It's Friday.

**Mandy:** [00:00:08] It is

**Becky:** [00:00:10] Not that that matters because this will be posted on a random day of the week. Anyways, it's Friday, Friday. Yay. I thought we could talk about how to find e-learning tools to integrate into your classroom.

I have a lot of faculty members that come to me and ask for how they can find different things to make their job easier, or to involve students more, to engage students. And so I thought maybe we could talk about how to find those, how to tell if it's a good product or not kind of along that line. How does that sound.

**Wayne:** [00:00:48] That sounds good to me.

**Mandy:** [00:00:49] Awesome.

**Becky:** [00:00:50] So I'll start a little bit with kind of where I'm coming from with this. When I have faculty members come to me, they usually have a specific issue that [00:01:00] they're looking to solve. And so I would recommend if you're kind of on your own with trying to figure out how to solve a specific issue using technology, make sure that you're very clear when you type something into the search bar. For example, if I just do a broad search educational technology tools for teachers, I'm going to get more information than anyone has time to sort through or figure out what they want to do with. And so really it's a good idea. I would recommend narrowing down the scope of what you're looking for.

And then really just start clicking. When looking at what sites maybe to use, look for the .Edu, .gov, those kinds of things are pretty reliable. Wayne. What do you think? What kind of advice do you have when navigating for those kinds of tools on the web?

**Wayne:** [00:01:56] Well, there's a website that I've used before [00:02:00] that. I'm gonna preface this a little bit. It is geared towards Canvas, the LMS Canvas, because, we don't have Canvas. I'm not plugging them or anything, but they're new enough that they make integrating tools into Canvas very easy, a little bit easier process than it is with some other learning management systems. So there's a website that I have used in the past to find the tools and it is called EDU-apps.org it's EDU dash apps.org, or, sorry, I guess there's a different URL. It redirects you to, which is easier. It's EDU app center.com so E D U a p p c e n t e r.com.

And that's cool because, they are all tools that have an LTI component so that they can be integrated with your learning management system and it'll even [00:03:00] show you the

ones that are, IMS certified and IMS is the, organization that kind of manages the standard for LTI.

**Becky:** [00:03:11] That's really cool.

**Wayne:** [00:03:12] Does that make sense?

**Mandy:** [00:03:14] For anybody, that's not sure what it, what LTI is. Can you just tell us like really, really briefly what that means?

**Wayne:** [00:03:21] Yeah, absolutely. So, LTI stands for learning tools, interoperability, which is that a strange word, but, it basically, it's just the standard for connecting educational tools to one another.

And I believe if I'm not mistaken that there is, a piece of that that's called caliper . So for a long time, LTI tools only worked one direction. So you couldn't push like grades back, you know, they, they didn't talk back the other way but, a lot of them do now.

as you might know, you can publish grades [00:04:00] from, like a textbook publisher that you have integrated in your LMS, from them back to the LMS and things like that. So, there is this sort of two way communication now with some of them, and that's all managed by IMS global as well.

I think it's that global IMS. I don't know about the global part.

**Mandy:** [00:04:18] So if somebody found one of these LTI tools and wanted to put it in like DTL on our campus, can they do that or do they need to talk to you about it, Wayne?

**Wayne:** [00:04:28] So it's, it's interesting. LTI can work in a couple of different ways. There are some LTI tools that, That they don't see, how do I put this?

Some of, most of them have sort of, yeah. an organizational level that they're installed and administered. and then individual courses underneath that can choose to use them. there are some that I've seen where the instructor does it all within their course. And this is all dependent too, on what you have, , access to do with your [00:05:00] role in your LMS.

, but like for, for our campus, , we do allow instructors to set those things up. On their own, if they work that way, does that make sense? , but for the most part, what we like to do is we like to I'm up for any use them. I like to set them up at the org level so that it's easier for the instructor.

They don't have to mess with secrets and keys was, they're all things that allow these two components to talk to each other securely. And the instructor doesn't have to mess with those. If we do it that way, they just pull it into their course, set it up, connect it to their course with the provider , and use it.

**Becky:** [00:05:41] So, Wayne, if you set it up at the org level like that, does that make it available for anybody who uses the LMS or do you still have to request it as a faculty?

**Wayne:** [00:05:52] Well, so for our campus, I can't speak for everyone everywhere obviously, but for our campus [00:06:00] , I always just enable these tools to be available to all courses.

However, in the setup for our LMS, you can choose which, wow, let's see what you can choose, which, divisions, which courses specifically, I mean, you really could break it down depending on how your organization is set up. So maybe you have a tool that's only available to your health programs or, or maybe only available to a specific health program.

And if your LMS has broken down that way into that kind of structure, then, then usually you can lock it down to just the groups you want to have access to it. We're small. And, , the tools that we use, you still have to have access to it on the, on the, , Publisher's side of things. So, you know, if I'm teaching a class that uses Cengage, for instance, , if I pull in the Pearson module, but I don't use, I don't have a Pearson account, I can't use it.

So it really doesn't matter. I feel like it's, it's pretty secure. [00:07:00] Is that, is that what you're asking? Does that make sense?

**Becky:** [00:07:02] Yeah. Nope. That's exactly what I was asking. That makes sense. Thank you.

**Wayne:** [00:07:06] Yeah.

**Mandy:** [00:07:06] So where else might you suggest people look for online tools?

**Wayne:** [00:07:13] Well, you know, I've, I've also found some just from, just searching.

I'm always looking for ones that integrate. So I'm usually looking for specifically LTI tools, and you'll find a ton just from that search alone. Occasionally even find the free ones.

**Becky:** [00:07:30] You know, another thing I really, really would encourage anybody that's in education.

Use social media for good. There are groups on Facebook for teachers, for instructional design, for technology, there are different people on Twitter that you can follow , and Instagram, all those different social media platforms. There are a lot of educational tools that you can find on there [00:08:00] by following some of those accounts.

A lot of those people will share really good tools.

**Wayne:** [00:08:06] I'm sure. You know, another possible place that people could look as if they're a member of an organization. Like what's the one I just added you guys to the other day. ITC, the instructional technology council, if you're a member of an organization like that, they actually, and I don't know if the both of you are aware of that, so I'll put it out there for you too as well.

But, there's actually some groups in there for communicating with instructors and admins and stuff within different regions of the country. So like we're in the West or northwest

region , so you can, I don't know if you're in there by default, but you can add yourself to this sort of distribution list so that you can ask questions and communicate that way too.

**Mandy:** [00:08:49] I'll have to check that out.

**Wayne:** [00:08:50] Yeah.

**Becky:** [00:08:53] You know, and also when you're Googling, if you Google just a general tool that you're looking for a problem, if you look at the [00:09:00] .edu sites, a lot of the bigger universities, the big four year universities share that information.

Their instructors will share how they're using it, and you can go look and see how those tools are being integrated into courses and see it already being used in an education setting and how it works. So that kind of can give you an idea of how it will work for your own class.

**Mandy:** [00:09:23] So let's say that I have found a tech tool or I had a tech tool recommended to me. How do I know if it's a good one?

**Becky:** [00:09:34] I can go ahead and take this one. So first of all, make sure that whatever you're doing is meant to augment the learning. You don't ever want to take tools and expect the tools to replace learning, to replace the actual information that they're trying to get. You're just using this as a tool or as a vessel to get information to your students. So Mandy, [00:10:00] once you have found the tool that you're wanting to use, there's a pretty big rubric that you can use to identify if this is going to be a good tool or app to use in your class.

There's a lot of different categories in that. The first one I want to talk about is functionality. So you want to make sure that the tool's operations complete what you want it to do. There's quality and it's suited both to the intended purposes. So does, does the tool serve the intended purpose well?

So some of the sub categories that you're looking for on that is, is the scale. So can the tool be scaled to accommodate two people or 20 people in a class? Ease of use. Is it user friendly? Is it intuitive for a student to go in and use? Are they going to get confused by it? , especially when you're looking at ease of use, is there a tech support available for it, especially with those free tools.

There's not necessarily a lot of [00:11:00] tech support available, so if it breaks there may not be anyone there to fix it. , so that's something you cut consider that it's not a, you know, do or die, but make sure that's something you take into consideration. And then, hyper-mediality, can you use different channels?

Can this communicate with the students via audio via textual, visual different ways, and that falls kind of back into that accessibility, also. So when we look at accessibility standards, you want to make sure the tool meets those accessibility guidelines. You can find those guidelines at W3C and it's the WCAG standards.

If you check it based on that, most tools are going to have an accessibility link and you can go see they'll. They'll say whether they meet the accessibility standards that are up to snuff or not. You wanna make sure it's user focused, make sure that the equipment is available.

So if you are expecting your students [00:12:00] to use an e-tool, something that can be accessible through a computer or through their mobile device or through a tablet, you want all students to be able to access that though. So if you're going to require something that needs a webcam and video , and audio, you just want to make sure that you know what that equipment is and make sure that your students have access to all of that equipment.

Like Wayne talked about integration and integrating within an LMS. That's definitely those technical aspects. Something that you want to look at. The browser, can it be used in a browser? What browser can it be used in? You know, we have some, some tools that are better in Chrome. Some that are maybe better in edge.

And so just make sure that you know, which browsers that'll work in.

**Wayne:** [00:12:47] So are you saying, are you saying that if it says it only works in Internet Explorer, seven, you should avoid it?

**Becky:** [00:12:54] Um, yes, I am saying that. Make [00:13:00] sure it works in the current versions of all browsers.

**Wayne:** [00:13:03] If you're using Internet Explorer seven, you've got much bigger problems.

**Becky:** [00:13:07] We know that Chrome is available to everybody and Firefox is available in general to everybody you can download those. But the biggest, the thing is to be aware, because if you have something that only works well in Chrome, then you want to make sure you let your students know that because you don't want them to try to access it in Firefox, and then it doesn't work and they can't get it to do what it's supposed to do.

So with the browser, yes. It should be a current version and make sure you know which one it is and make sure that users aren't gonna need to download a bunch of additional software, or if they do make sure you're aware of that so that you can forward that information to your students, so they know what they're doing.

Another category is mobile design. You want to know, can you access this on a mobile device? I really would recommend that any tools that an [00:14:00] instructor uses are able to be used on a mobile device in addition to a computer just because people are so busy and day to day lives, it's very convenient.

Like for our welding department, they have videos that students are required to watch well, these guys are here welding for however many hours a day, and then they have families or they're at work for eight hours a day and they don't have time to grab their computer, open it up, log in, wait for everything to load, just so they can go watch a 10 minute video or a 15 minute video.

But if that's something that it's quickly available on their phone, like we have our pulse app. And so you can go straight into your course through your mobile device and have those videos, linked in there, those students can spend 10 minutes on their lunch break, watching the video they were supposed to watch.

So really I think mobile design and access on a mobile unit is probably one of the more important things you want to [00:15:00] consider just for accessibility for your students. Also offline access. Is this something that's only going to be available via the internet via a cellular network, or is it something that they can download and watch later?

And they're not going to be required to have that. Something to consider. Another big thing that I don't think gets addressed often enough is privacy, data protection, and rights. At the college level at the higher ed level, it is a lot different than the K-12 level.

Even though we are positioned for more of a higher ed level , just in case we have any K-12 listeners out there, please, please, please, please, please make sure you understand the rules before you have your students sign up for accounts that have personal information in them. And even though when we look at it from a college level, these are adults and they are able to knowingly click that little box that says the privacy [00:16:00] concerns, really we want to be careful what we're encouraging our students to put out there too. We don't want them putting out private information that they may not know better as to whether it should be out there or not.

So really look at the privacy policies of any apps or tools that you want to use so that you can make sure that if they're saving data, if they're selling data, you really are fully aware of where that data is going to go before you send it to the students.

Another category is social presence. Collaboration is huge and collaboration is a great way to support a community of learning. There are so many different tools out there that you can use for your students to be able to collaborate both face to face or remotely. So if you're looking for collaboration tools, you want to make sure that you're looking for tools that have synchronous and asynchronous opportunities, transfer of information between people. You want to make sure you have user accountability, you as the instructor should be able [00:17:00] to control learner anonymity on your apps.

So do you want students to be able to see each other's names? Things like that. And then diffusion is the other sub category there. How widely known is this tool? Obviously Facebook is huge. So if we were going to have a Facebook group for a class set up to do any kind of collaborative learning, everyone, I shouldn't say everyone.

Practically everyone has heard of Facebook or knows what it is. Kahoot is another very, very popular tool. Most of your students have heard of Kahoot. Most of them have probably played on Kahoot. And so using tools that are more widely known make the user experience easier for everybody involved because it's something that they're familiar with.

Teaching presence is another category. You want to make sure that the tool's easy to use for you to facilitate that it's easily customizable, or if you don't need it to be [00:18:00] customizable. Quizzlet for example, Is it really customizable tool you can go in and there are multiple different ways to use the tool.

And as the instructor, you can go in and set those requirements of you want your students to take a quiz or you want them to use the flashcards and you create the quiz so it's all your information. So you have that customization. It's not someone else created that. Like, if we

look at Cengage and we're doing for some of our computer classes, we don't really get to customize the experience the assignments are what they are , they're not something we have to create ourselves, versus if you're using something like Quizzlet, you're actually having to go in and put that information in yourself and create it yourself.

Learning analytics is another part. If you can monitor the learner's performance and there are different analytical components to the tool , a lot of times, like if you have a dashboard or something, [00:19:00] I know Khan Academy, for example, you can actually set up as the instructor, assign different modules, and you'll have a dashboard there where you can actually go through and see who's doing it, how much they completed, where they struggled, where they didn't struggle.

So that learning analytics is really important I think because if you don't have any way to monitor the performance, do you really have a way of rating the tool as to whether it's beneficial or not? The final category on the rubric is cognitive presence.

And really you just want to measure, does the tool enhance engagement? Is it too much? Is it overly complex? Because if it's going to take you longer to teach someone how to use the tool than it is to actually use the tool, then it probably is not something that you want to use. You really want to make sure that it is not going to be more cumbersome than [00:20:00] just doing what you've always done. Think about higher order thinking using the tool will facilitate learners to exercise those higher order thinking skills. You want to make sure that that is being facilitated by the tool. And you want to make sure that learners can receive formative feedback on a regular basis from the tool so that they're still getting something out of that.

That's a really fast overview of the rubric and I think Mandy is going to try to link that.

**Mandy:** [00:20:30] Becky, a couple of things stuck out to me as you were describing all of that. So I guess one thing that I wanted to touch on a little bit more is that ease of use. You were talking about that you want to make sure that it's not really difficult to train students on how to use the tool.

How would you know, ahead of time, like, is there a way to know what the learning curve is going to be for students? I mean, I know, as an instructor, you would hopefully have tried it [00:21:00] out and played with it, but then when you have to actually implement it in your class and get students to start using that might look a lot different.

So how would you know, or how could you plan for something like that?

**Becky:** [00:21:14] Well really in a perfect world, if you have a friendly student that you know, and have worked with that you could have maybe jump on and just take a look at it or give it a test for you. Or if you have kids at home that might be able to test it out for you or a friend that might be able to test it out.

Another coworker is a really good way to have someone take a look at it and see how easy it is for them to figure out without instruction and how user friendly it is if they just log in and start going with it, or if they really get stuck. Also as you're learning to use the tool, you're

going to get some insight into how difficult or how easy it is. Really a lot of [00:22:00] that until you put it in the class and see if the students can use it or not well, other than having other people try it, I don't know that there's a lot of advice I can give you for that. You know most of these tools have tutorial videos on them.

I would watch the tutorial video. I would go look for reviews on it. I would look at the reviews on the app store that people are saying that this is user friendly or not, but ultimately when it comes down to it, you're not going to know until you integrate it into your class and have students use it.

I hope people will keep in mind that this idea of students being digital natives, that we can just put anything in front of them and they'll figure it out is a fallacy. They can't, if they want to know information, they'll spend hours going and finding that information. If it's important to them to know that.

And whether it should be, or not sometimes learning how to use something for school isn't as important as [00:23:00] learning how to do the latest Tik Tok dance and it is what it is. But we need to stop making this assumption that students know exactly what they're doing with anything and that they can just jump on and be masters of the universe in it.

Cause they can't be. And that that's just the way it is. So we've got to give grace to them too.

**Mandy:** [00:23:19] So another question, and Wayne, maybe you can speak to this one too. I was thinking about the LTI integration and everything, but if somebody finds a tool that doesn't integrate with an LMS, is it not ideal to have students leave the LMS to use an external learning tool?

I mean, should we, should we really shoot for as much integration as possible or what are your thoughts on that?

**Wayne:** [00:23:51] Well, I don't have any data to back this up, but...

**Mandy:** [00:23:57] We love anecdotal data.

**Wayne:** [00:23:59] Right? [00:24:00] But I feel like having the students in one system just seems logical, if you can, you know, that that's the best way to keep everything in one place.

I don't have data, but I do have, again, anecdotal information. There's one integration that we set up, several years ago now it was the Pearson my math lab integration. And, like with that one, it's one that you could use as long as you start from D2L and so that the accounts are linked from the student standpoint, then once that's done, you can either use it within or Brightspace, or you could log in to my math lab separately and it will write the data back to Brightspace and everything and sync. But you have to start it from there. You have to do that initial connection from Brightspace. We have instructors who've used it, some instructors do the full integration and some only do the bare minimum of the integration.

Right. And so. [00:25:00] What we've heard from students is that if they've used it fully integrated in Brightspace, if that was their initial experience, then the next math class that



they took, they kind of expected it to be the same way they preferred it the first way. If they initially used my math lab outside of Brightspace, then they preferred it that way.

You know, so I think it comes down to typically you're most familiar with the first experience you had. Again, that's anecdotal. I don't have any data to back that up, just, you know, probably three students mentioned it. Just kidding. But, that kinda makes sense though, right?

It feels odd to do it differently than you did before. Right. I don't know. I would feel that way too. So I guess I can kind of see it. Yeah. Does that answer your question?

**Mandy:** [00:25:54] Yeah, it does. Consistency would be good. I don't know what I was really looking for there, unless there were just [00:26:00] some policies or practices that you were aware of, but I don't think we really have a campus policy that says we can't direct students to external learning tools or anything like that.

**Wayne:** [00:26:13] The problem with that is that these tools, although there's a standard for how the tools talk to each other, there's no standard for how the tools work, outside of the communication aspect. So even within the same publisher, like I'll use Pearson as an example, and this is not a negative about Pearson whatsoever.

It's just, it's interesting that the tools work differently based on the material, the kind of course. So, you know, the math part, the MyLab and mastering, you could integrate it and do all the work, all the math, homework and everything. And it looked like you were in Brightspace, even though it was really my math lab, but then we integrated some

stuff from Pearson. It was like welding lab and mastering, which is [00:27:00] amazing that that even exists. But, we did that several years ago and the integration really only opened their digital textbook and gave them a few tools there. But none of it worked within Brightspace. It all just popped up in another window.

So there's no real standard for how that works. It's really. That's each individual company, they all work differently.

**Mandy:** [00:27:23] Sure. That makes sense. So I have another question. Becky, you were talking about a lot of different things to take into account with evaluating whether a tool is going to work well or not.

And something came to my mind. I read a lot of education blogs, and I listen to a lot of education podcasts, but quite a few of them are either geared specifically toward K12 or toward higher ed. And most of the things that I read and hear when they're talking about any kind of cool tech tools are usually from the K-12 podcasts. [00:28:00]

I know there's a few tools that are really very clearly geared toward K12 education, but can tech tools be used across educational levels or are there things that higher ed instructors might want to look for when they're choosing a tech tool to see if it would work better for older students, rather than being geared toward younger students.

**Becky:** [00:28:28] Well, frankly, we're all human and I'll give you an example that isn't necessarily a higher ed example, but when I was in the K-12 world, I had a very difficult class of sophomores. They were very, very, very trying for me and I started a sticker chart, which sounds absolutely ridiculous.

You would not believe how excited those 15 and 16 year olds got over receiving stickers every day. It was amazing. And it [00:29:00] worked like I had such good behavior after that. So that really taught me that age shouldn't limit what we do. You know, I'm still like a little kid sometimes, if I get a sucker at the doctor's office, I think that's great.

So really our students like these tools too, and I'll use Kahoot again, I know there are faculty members here on campus actually, I know that use Kahoot. And the students love it because it's fun and it's engaging. And it's simple. You're correct that most tools are directed more towards the K-12 environment, but really, I wouldn't even consider that as something to limit.

I mean, obviously you're not going to use ABC mouse in higher ed, there are some things more of the elementary level, but I think most of the middle school slash high school geared tools for the most part are going to be beneficial at the college level too. There are others that will not be, that will be just far too [00:30:00] childish, and you would be able to figure that out.

Now there are also tools that maybe aren't so fun, but that are beneficial for students. I absolutely love Mendeley. Mendeley is kind of a bookmarking site. It keeps track of your different resources for research, you can sort them, however you want.

You can put them into different groups and then it will create your citations for you based on about 20 different types of citation requirements. And it is such a great way to organize your research. I used it significantly and so that's probably why I'm so passionate about it, but that would be a good tool that could be advised for college students to use that isn't necessarily fun, but it is super helpful at organization.

So, and I think that would be geared more towards higher ed because I don't know that they do quite as much research in the high school level as they do [00:31:00] at the college level.

**Mandy:** [00:31:01] Sure. That makes sense.

Well, those are all my questions for you guys. What else do you have?

**Becky:** [00:31:08] You know, I will note one more thing on the rubric, cause there were eight categories there and it was a whole lot of information, some of that is not going to be applicable. So if it's not applicable, just cross it off, don't worry about it.

So if you can't figure out where it fits in there, it may not fit in there at all. This is a flexible rubric so don't think that you have to hit every single category there.

**Mandy:** [00:31:33] All right, friends. Thanks so much. That was great. I appreciate learning more about how to find and evaluate tech tools.

Have a good day guys.

**Becky:** [00:31:44] Thanks Mandy and Wayne. Bye.