

1046-S1-1488      **Edwin P Herman\*** (eherman@uwsp.edu), Department of Mathematical Sciences, University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point, Stevens Point, WI 54481. *Using Discussion Boards to Enhance Understanding in Mathematics Courses*. Preliminary report.

Ideally, online discussion boards allow students to organize their ideas and more easily reference those of other students. This can lead to increased enthusiasm and a stronger sense of ownership of the material. Unfortunately, poorly designed boards can also be a disaster, especially for those unfamiliar with them. Because of this, many instructors shy away from this useful technology.

It is not necessary to be an expert to add an online component to a course, nor does it require major retooling. A modest investment of time can yield positive results by encouraging students to mentor each other or collectively tackle larger problems.

I have used discussion boards for three different courses (both major and non-major). The boards were used in conjunction with assigned homework problems. Grading schemes varied by course: one course required weekly posts; one gave extra credit; and one gave no grade credit. As you might imagine, participation rates and student feedback also varied.

In my presentation I will discuss what I have learned about what to do and what not to do when incorporating discussion boards into a math course and offer useful references for those interested in trying them out for themselves. (Received September 15, 2008)