

**Audience:** The audience for the session included a group of educators who meet online Thursday nights to discuss and share ideas about various topics in the field of education during an informal peer learning session. On the night of the Framegame, 7 participants played in the game and a few others lurked in the virtual “corner”. While many of the weekly attendees are k-12 teachers, some are educational technology specialists in college or corporate settings. Nearly all of the participants are using Internet based technologies to support learning activities. A growing concern is how to foster appropriate participant interactions within the online learning environment.

**Topic - Tactics to promote positive online interactions:** While most would agree that the goal is to create and support positive interactions (free of “flame wars” or “cyber bullying”), many are unsure how to go about it. Is it a matter of just setting strict online codes of conduct? Is it about modeling good behavior? Is it about discussion moderation and tossing out the bad apples?

**Framegame – Take Five:** I selected the Take Five Framegame to generate possible tactics which educators could use to create and support positive interactions in their online environments.

**Online Communication:** This group is made up of technology geeks who love new online learning challenges, so I was not too concerned about running this online versus f2f. While I ran into a few glitches, the following online communications tools provided an effective and efficient means of facilitating the game:

- *Instant Message:* <http://edtechtalk.com/chat> This chat room was used to facilitate text based chat.
- *Skype:* <http://skype.com> was used to facilitate the voice discussions.
- *Whiteboard:* <http://www.skrbl.com/> – Skrble is a free VERY user friendly web based whiteboard used to document the brainstorming topics and to facilitate the “voting” (see below). See actual skrble from the game here <http://www.skrbl.com/badgerjen01> **Note: if you scribble, you will be amending the document – so skrble with care 😊**
- *Snag It:* <http://www.techsmith.com/snagit.asp> To capture screen shots of the online interactions.
- *Audio Recording:* <http://edtechtalk.com/> The audio from the entire session was recorded which will soon be uploaded and stored at the EdTechTalk web site.

**Game Play:** The following outlines the planned script (talking points and actions) for the session. The “Notes” sections in italics below highlight deviations from either the basic Framegame or the script.

- **Brief players:** The topic for this brainstorm is tactics to use as educators to foster positive interactions within online learning environments. In the next half hour, we will explore this topic by coming up with a list of effective tactics to take back to the classroom to both foster appropriate participant interactions and address inappropriate conduct should it arise.
- **Individual brainstorm:** For the next few minutes, please reflect on the topic and come up with a short list of effective techniques that you would use to foster appropriate and positive participant interactions in an online learning environment. Try to keep your list of solutions short and to the point as we will be discussing them in more detail in the next step.

*[Note: Given 7 attendees joined the session, I ran this version of Take Five as an individual version (per the suggestion on p. 261 in Framegames). However, if I had been faced with a group of 10 or more, my plan was to ask for volunteers to pair up and use the private text chat function to communicate with a partner.]*

- **Group Brainstorm on Whiteboard:** Let us now move over to the whiteboard and begin forming a combined list of possible techniques. Using the text tool, take turns typing in your list of suggested techniques in the left hand column. Try to keep an eye on the list to avoid adding an item already offered by another player. Duplicate entries will be combined before we move to the next step. Let's try to get a combined list of 10 to 12 good possible tactics on the whiteboard. Also, please speak up if you would like clarification about a possible solution.

*[Note: This process prompted participants to share lengthy descriptions about each of the tactics ("Here is what I do with my students ...", which ate into the time previously allocated for the final debrief. However, it didn't seem to make any sense to stifle the brainstorming conversation (the point of the game) just to stick to the game script.]*

- **Voting - Round 1:** We will now begin the process of voting for the most effective approach. Using the pen tool, select the blue color and place a check mark next to the recommendation that you feel is the most effective tactic.
- **Scoring - Round 1:** Now that we have all made our top choices, we will score this round. The most popular response for this round was "\*\*\*". Therefore, those who selected this response should score 1 points. As "\*\*\*" suggested this tactic, s/he should score 5 points. As a friendly reminder, all scoring is on the honor system. Therefore, as I read out the score for each round, please keep a running tally of your points.
- **Voting - Round 2 - 5:** Consider this list again (minus any item that is crossed out) and use the pen tool (with the red color) and place a check mark next to the recommendation that you feel is the most effective tactic. It can be the same item you selected in a previous round, as long as that item is not already in our top choices. [Repeat through round 5]
- **Scoring - Round 2 - 5:** Now that we have all made our top choices, we will score this round. The most popular response for this round was "\*\*\*". Therefore, those who selected this response should score 1 points and "\*\*\*" who suggested the tactic should score 5 points.

*[Note regarding scoring: For ease of facilitation in this online environment, I made slight adjustments to the scoring scheme from the original Framegame model.]*

- **Conclusion of the Game:** We now have a list of the top 5 techniques. Please add up your personal score and share it with the group. Congratulations to our winner!
- **Debrief:** Let's more fully consider the list and discuss the merits of not only our top 5 choices, but how we arrived at this list. Do you think through this method we arrived at a good working list of 5 effective techniques? What surprises you about the list? Would you like to make a case for or against items that were selected or any that were not selected in the top 5?

*[Note: Given the time we spent discussing the recommended tactics during the brainstorm, we did not have time for a full debrief. Instead, I offered to compile the list from the session so that the group can pick up their discussion next time.]*

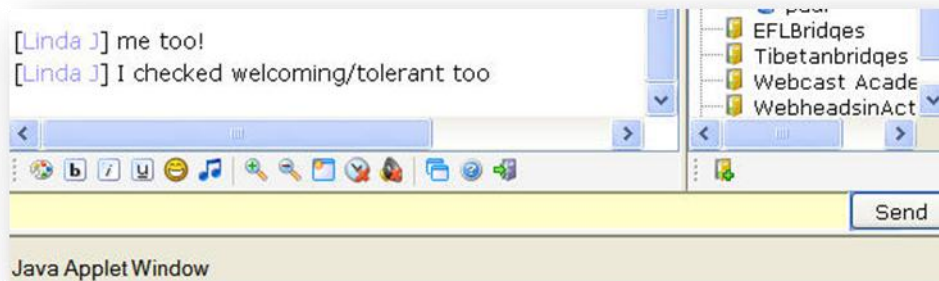
### **Critique / Reflection:**

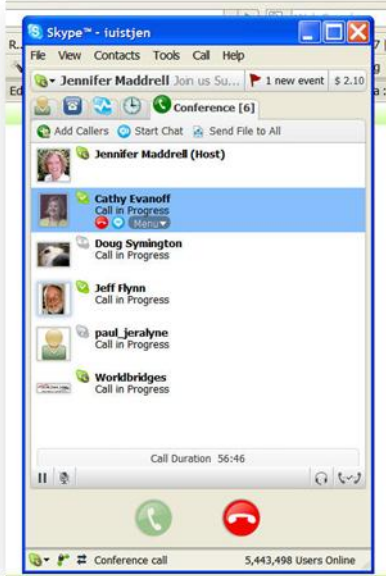
- **Time:** We spent about 40 minutes playing the game. As noted above, we spent more time than I had originally allocated for the brainstorm portion, which left us out of time for a full debrief. If I had more time, I would like to have heard more from the group about what they thought about the process (effectiveness, efficiency, etc).
- **Scoring / Voting:** The participants were not that interested in the scoring and voting aspects. They were far more interested in discussing the topic than coming up with the most “popular” vote. Therefore, I’m not sure if the scoring or voting is a crucial element when you have highly motivated participants. However, I can see how it could add interest with less motivated participants and when you have enough participants to make it a team based game.
- **Quality of Participant Recommendations:** The list of participant recommendations, as well as the ensuing discussion was great. I think this was due to the participants’ interest in the topic, as well as the participatory nature of the brainstorm on the whiteboard. Each recommendation seemed to build on another until it seemed the group fleshed out the key tactics.
- **Interest / Engagement:** Participant interest level and engagement was great! However, I purposely chose a topic that I knew the group would find interesting. Coincidentally, this group had been criticized in a discussion board comment about some dialog that a listener found less than positive the week before. We were able to kick off our discussion by using that as an example of how difficult it can be to keep online interactions positive for all participants. This clearly helped to gain participant interest. In addition, the process does encourage participation from all players, both in posting recommendations as well as in voting. The participants indicated that they liked the game and felt it helped to bring out a good discussion and a list of tactics to use in the future. However, as usual, I INTERJECTED TOO MUCH!
- **Online Facilitation:** The communication tools made this an easy game to facilitate online. See the screen captures from the session below. However, that being said, I had a group of self-described “tech geeks” who love to play with new technology. I can see how the whiteboard could become a free-for-all disaster in the hands of kids (but they would probably have a blast in the process!) However, I also see how this could be facilitated asynchronously using a discussion board and an online polling / voting mechanism, such as in a content management system.
- **My Key Take Always:** I now appreciate how games can raise interest level and engage a group. In addition, the planning process and structure of the game helped me as the facilitator organize and prepare my thoughts. However, I can also guess that some audiences would not be as interested in the “game play” (competitive scoring) aspect – especially when discussing serious or heavy topics. I think if I would have pushed to stick to the voting / scoring scheme I would have definitely taken away from the flow of the discussion. In the end, I found Take Five to be a very effective format to get the group brainstorming to come up with recommended tactics. I will definitely attempt this format again in the future!

Screen Shots of Game Play



Screenshots of text chat window with 7 participants (plus host). While the Skype chat was my primary means of communicating with the group, we shared web site links and sidebar communication in the text chat room. Also, 2 participants (Lee and Linda J) chose not to speak, but rather opted to listen to the audio and make their votes on the whiteboard. Not too surprisingly, a couple of people lurked about logging in and out of the text chat (see “rendy” at left) and listening to the audio, but ultimately did not choose to participate in the actual game— such is life in an open online community ☺





Snapshot of Skype window at end of debrief. Two additional players did not join in the Skype call, but participated via the text chat (see above). While the call duration was an hour, the game didn't begin until 20 minutes into the call.

Recommended Tactic	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5

This is a cropped image of the draft game board which was transferred to the white board. The objective was to get the players to type their recommended tactics in the left column and place check marks in the boxes for each round. As shown below, the actual outcome was a bit "messier".

Recommended Tactic	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5
Teacher involvement		✓			
code of conduct - explicit					
transparency		✓	✓		
Student interest	✓	✓			
cross your fingers / hope for the best				✓	✓
welcoming/tolerant of differing opinions	2	✓			
responsiveness & openness					
peer pressure / policing themselves			✓	✓	

hope for the best

welcoming/tolerant of differing opinions

responsiveness & openness

peer pressure / policing themselves

motivation

discussion moderator

sense of humour

scaffold / model

creating a culture

We have to stay on it continuing the

Thanks..clap clap from Lee

I have been lurking & voting

These are cropped screenshots of whiteboard. Note that colors were used to signify the different rounds of “votes”. The whiteboard got quite messy, but the participants seemed to like the “roll up your sleeves” collaborative spirit of the process. Note how one participant started out as a “lurker”, but then joined in to vote!

See the actual whiteboard here:

<http://www.skrbl.com/badgerjen01>

I know it is tempting, but try to just look and not touch 😊

The top responses were:

1. Scaffold / model
2. Welcome / be tolerant of differing opinions
3. Sense of humor
4. Respond in civil manner (say sorry) (to avoid flame wars)
5. Work to create a “culture”

Additional responses were:

- Transparency
- Keep students interested
- Cross your fingers / hope for the best
- Responsive / openness
- Peer pressure / policing themselves
- Formal discussion moderator
- Stick with it / continue the conversations even when tough
- Explicit code of conduct (*no one liked*)