

Virtual Classroom Tool Options

July 30, 2020

This document intends to explain the five virtual classroom tools available to Purdue Fort Wayne: Bongo, WebEx Meetings, WebEx Training, Zoom, and MS Teams. Please note, this is based on current contracts and testing of the tools. Changes to contracts and tool resources may occur.

Short Summary

- Bongo (free version) is integrated in Brightspace. It is supported, but it is **not** recommended because of problematic instructional limitations.
- WebEx Meetings and WebEx Training remain the recommended virtual classroom tools, though WebEx is not integrated in Brightspace.
- Zoom is not available yet. There are ongoing discussions and necessary testing related to Zoom, including purchasing processes and security concerns. Before further contracting information and testing results become available, we will not broadcast any news with a false promise.
- MS Teams is recommended with caveats and limited support.
- Other than the Bongo free version, we currently do not have a date for any other virtual classroom tools to be integrated in Brightspace. With the possible current exception of Zoom, all others could be used outside the LMS.

Bongo

Bongo is the virtual classroom tool that is integrated in Brightspace. Due to COVID-19, our campus had access to the premium version through the end of June 2020. Instructors now have access to the free version of Bongo, which is limited. The major confines include:

- No breakout sessions (for students to work in smaller groups) are available.
- Video recordings of meetings are available for only a short time.
- Only 250 sessions are allowed each week across the Purdue system. This is particularly problematic.

In short, Bongo is not an acceptable solution for most classes. In our testing, we found many limitations related to the Bongo Premium version as well, which would limit usefulness to classes and learning, making WebEx a more usable tool for faculty. There are currently no plans to invest in the premium version of Bongo for these reasons.

WebEx Meetings and WebEx Training

WebEx is the university supported web conferencing tool. It also has different products. The most commonly used ones are WebEx Meetings and WebEx Training. Please note, WebEx is not integrated into Brightspace. Users need to access their Purdue career account to login at purdue.webex.com. Therefore, students can participate in instructor created meetings and trainings; however, students cannot schedule meetings, as most of them do not know their Purdue Career account.

The interface of the two tools (WebEx Meetings and WebEx Training) are similar but have a few differences. Their major similarities include:

- Ability to schedule single or recurring sessions
- Video chat, audio chat, and text chat
- Audio participation through computer or phone
- Screen sharing and application sharing
- Whiteboard sharing with annotation
- Polling (to engage students with questions)
- Session recording
- Large number of participants

The major differences between WebEx Meetings and WebEx Trainings include:

- The breakout sessions feature is only available for [WebEx training](#). This allows for splitting a class into separate small group forums for discussion, problem-solving, etc.
- The Q&A panel is only available for WebEx training.

Zoom

At this time, we have yet to receive confirmation that a final, official Purdue contract has been signed with Zoom. Additionally, because of the speed at which decisions about contracting with Zoom have been made, the support staff in the Purdue system have not yet had an opportunity to test Zoom integration in Brightspace. Zoom integration in the Brightspace TEST environment is quickly being planned. The Purdue security group has just finished the security review of the paid version of Zoom. The review shows there are some security risks in using Zoom. **In particular, because of specifically identified security issues, Zoom users (faculty and staff) cannot communicate information restricted by FERPA or HIPPA guidelines.** The significance of this should not be underestimated. At this time, there is no guarantee that Zoom will be available in Fall 2020. Due to the above-mentioned issues, Zoom is not yet supported.

Assuming a finalized contract, successful testing and integration in Brightspace, and a departmental supported license (i.e. a faculty member cannot pay out of pocket with the likely Zoom agreement for a license), Zoom users will find that Zoom is similar to WebEx in the following major web conferencing features:

- Ability to schedule one or recurring sessions
- Video chat, audio chat, and text chat
- Audio participation through computer or phone
- Screen sharing and application sharing
- Whiteboard sharing with annotation
- Polling (to engage students with questions)
- Session recording

- Breakout sessions for group work (if using a WebEx Training instead of WebEx Meeting)

Users will find the following major difference between Zoom and WebEx:

- During Zoom breakout sessions, participants in breakout rooms can video chat with each other.

MS Teams

MS Teams offers several tools within its package, including the virtual classroom tool. This tool includes features such as text chat, video chat, audio chat, and screen sharing. When our virtual classroom review team tested Teams integration in Brightspace, we found some major limitations:

- Teams did not work properly in the content area of Brightspace (where most of us would want to use it), however, it did function in the activity feed widget from the course homepage.
- Once the instructor schedules a session within Brightspace, the time of that session cannot be reasonably modified.
- Any participants who joined the session have the same roles. That means the instructor has very little control of the learning environment (i.e. it is possible a student could “expel” the instructor from a session).

Some Questions

Common complaints we hear about WebEx are more often related to how a meeting is set up by the instructor and facilitated. While many would agree it is less intuitive than other programs, user issues with WebEx are rarely related to any features that are missing. The simple example is if the facilitator did not set up the room to mute participants upon entry and/or did not know how to mute participants at will, then the presenter would be interrupted constantly by participants with background noises. This is the same for all the web conferencing tools. Many users have also not been trained on how to use WebEx Trainings (instead of Meetings) to utilize the small group features.