Bb
Blackboard

Wimba Voice Board

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About Voice Boards

Overview

The Voice Board feature is a threaded, voice-based discussion board. While you may have used message boards before, Voice Boards take communication to the next level by adding voice to an intuitive, conversational interface.
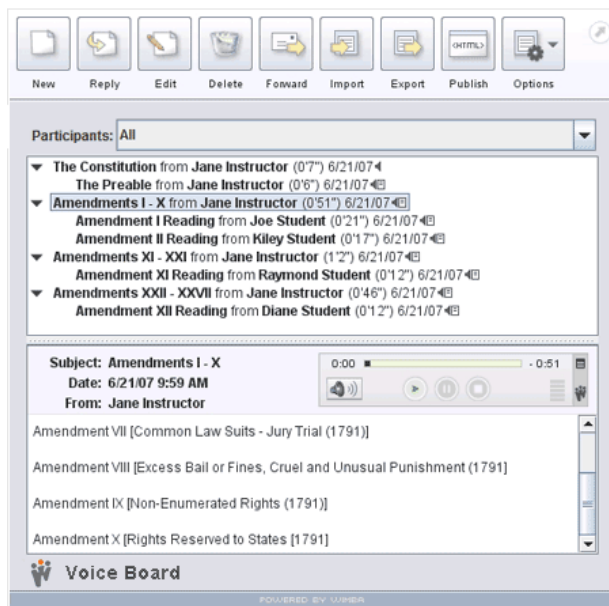
Voice Board Creation

1. In a Content Area in Blackboard, choose Add Interactive Tools > Voice Board.
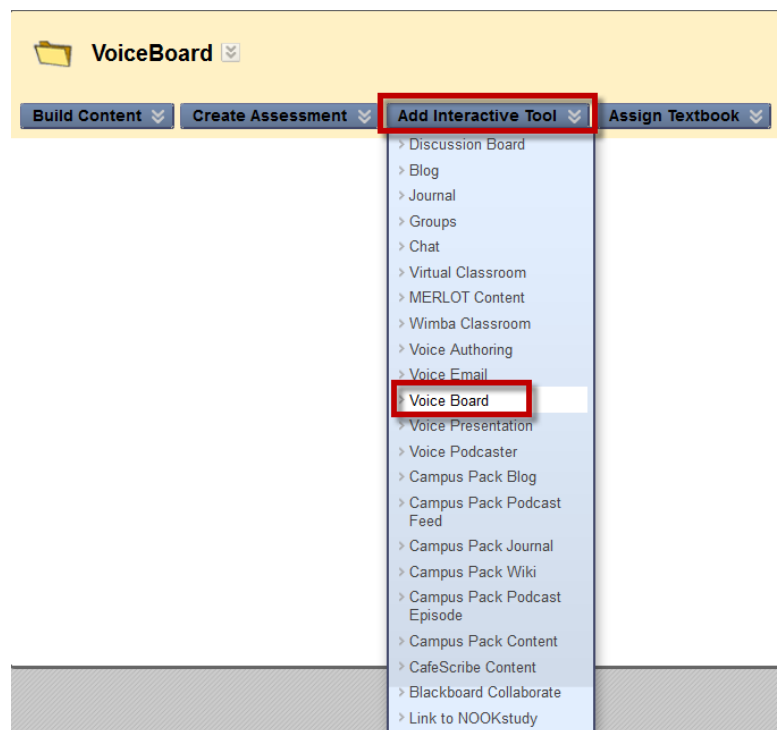
Settings

2	Settings	
Audio quality		Standard Quality - 12.8 kbit/s - Modem usage ▾
Max message length		3 min ▾
Display short message titles		☐
Display messages in chronological order		☐
Allow students to forward messages		☐
Allow students to start a new thread		☑
Make discussion threads private		☐
Grade	☐	Points possible [ ]

Display short message titles

By default, message titles contain a wealth of information:

- Subject
- Name of individual who posted the message
- Length of recording (if audio is associated with the message)
- Posting date

If you select short message titles, only the subject line and the name of the individual who posted the message are displayed.

Display messages in chronological order

By default, messages are displayed in the order in which they were posted to the Voice Board, with the newest messages at the top of the Board. If you select to view messages in chronological order, the oldest messages will appear at the top of the Board, and the newest at the bottom. This can be helpful for tracking student progress over time.

Allow users to start a new thread

By default, both students and instructors can compose new, top-level threads to a Voice Board. You can deselect this setting to restrict this student ability. This does not limit student-to-student interaction, unless you make the Voice Board discussion threads private or also do not allow users to reply to messages.

Allow users to forward a message

Granting this privilege allows users to send any post to an external email address. The email contains a link to any audio associated with the post, as well as its text and a note the student can type before sending.

Allow users to reply to messages

By default, both students and instructors can reply to any message posted to a Voice Board. Deselect this setting to restrict this student ability. Depending on the other settings you choose, you can either:

- Make a Board "read-only," where users cannot post messages (if you neither **allow users to start a new thread** nor **allow users to reply to messages**)
- Only allow users to compose top-level threads (if you only **allow users to start a new thread**)

Make discussion threads private

If discussion threads are private, only one-on-one communication between an instructor and a student is allowed. If this option is selected:

- Only instructors can compose new threads
- Students can only view their own replies and replies to them from the instructor
- Instructors can view all replies

Private threads allow for an instructor-student dialogue that is hidden from other students. An instructor can use this option to build assessments to which each student individually responds. The instructor can then privately respond to each student and securely provide grades and comments. Voice Boards can be reused each semester, their content re-purposed whenever necessary.

Audio Quality

The default setting (**Standard Quality**) will suit most needs. However, you may adjust the quality higher or lower, depending on your users' connectivity to the Internet. **Standard Quality** streams audio messages at a rate of approximately 13 kilobits per second (kbps), which works well for users on high and lower-bandwidth connections alike.

Max audio message length

You may adjust the maximum duration for which someone may record audio. This may be useful if you plan to use the Voice Board for timed assessment.

Using Voice Boards

Accessing Voice Boards

Once a Voice Board is created, and you are satisfied with its settings, it is ready for use.

To Access a Voice Board

1. Log in to Blackboard. Navigate to the content area where the voice board is located.

2. Click the **Voice Board** link. *If you do not have a microphone plugged in you will get an error message.*

Creating a New Thread

The New button, located in the upper left-hand corner of the Voice Board, allows new threads to be created. This button is always available for instructors, but is only available to students when the following privileges are set:

- Users are allowed to start new threads
- Discussion threads have not been made private

Click the **New** button to compose a new thread. A new Compose window appears.

Subject

Enter a relevant title for your post in the Subject field. This field is required.
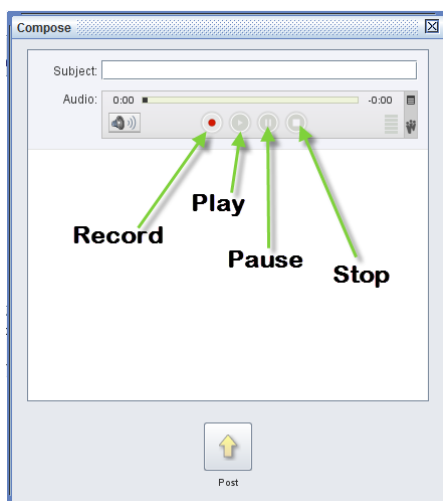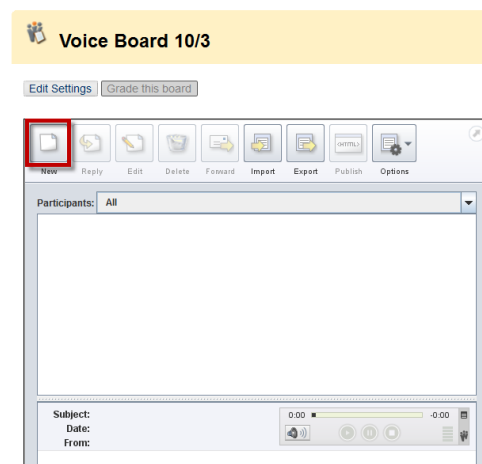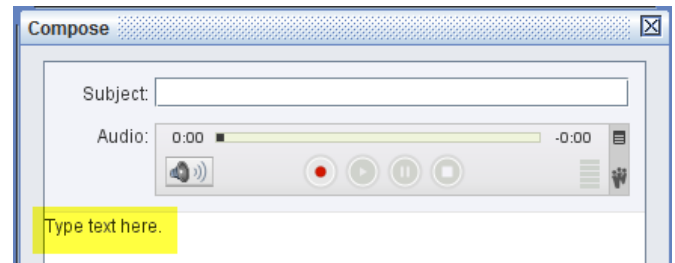
To Record a Message

1. Click the **Record** button (red circle) and speak into a microphone or headset connected to your computer to record your message.
2. Click **Pause** (two bars) to pause recording; click this button again to resume recording your message
3. Click **Stop** (square) when you have completed your message
4. Click **Play** (green triangle) to listen to your message. Click **Record** if you wish to re-record it.

Adding Text to a Message

To enter text to accompany your recording, click and type in the large text field at the bottom of the Compose window. Typing a message is optional, but may provide helpful information (such as instructions or an assessment question for users), or text that complements your recording.
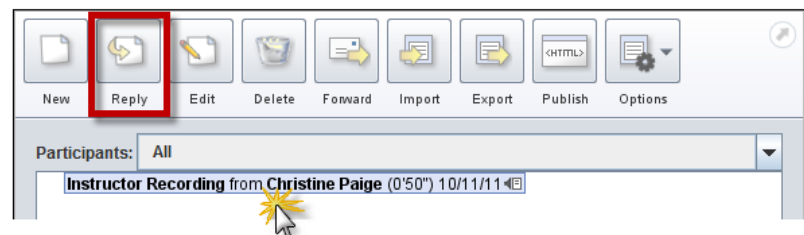
Posting a Message

When you are satisfied with your recording, and have entered a Subject (as well as any appropriate text), click the **Post** button at the bottom of the Compose window. If you do not wish to post this message, click the **Close (X)** button in the upper right-hand corner of the Compose window (Windows), or the red button in the upper left-hand corner (Mac), followed by the **Yes** button in the Confirm window.

Replying to a Message

By default, both students and instructors have the ability to reply to messages. However, this privilege may be disabled for students. To reply to a message, click the desired message from the top half of the Voice Board, followed by the **Reply** button in the upper left-hand corner. The process for creating a reply is identical to that of a new thread; the only difference is that any text associated with the message to which you are replying appears inline in the large text field at the bottom of the message. You can leave this text for reference, delete, or overwrite it.

Reviewing a Message

1. Click a message title in the top half of the Voice Board

2. The message (and its text) will appear in the message pane at the bottom of the Board.

3. To listen to an audio message, click the **Play** button within the Audio applet
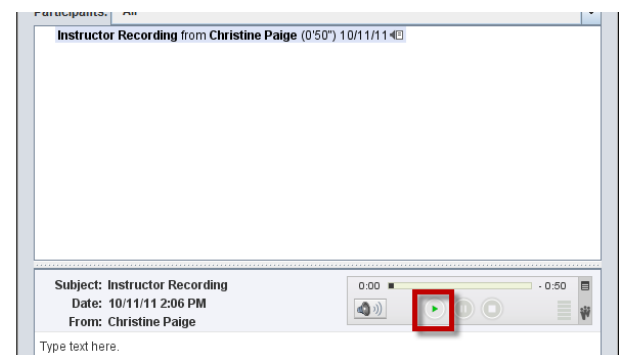
Editing a Message

If you wish to modify a posted message, click the **Edit** button at the top of the Board. A new window appears, providing the ability to record/re-record an audio message, as well as alter any text and/or the Subject field. Editing is only available to individuals with instructor level privileges, who may edit any post on the Board (including messages from other instructors and any student).
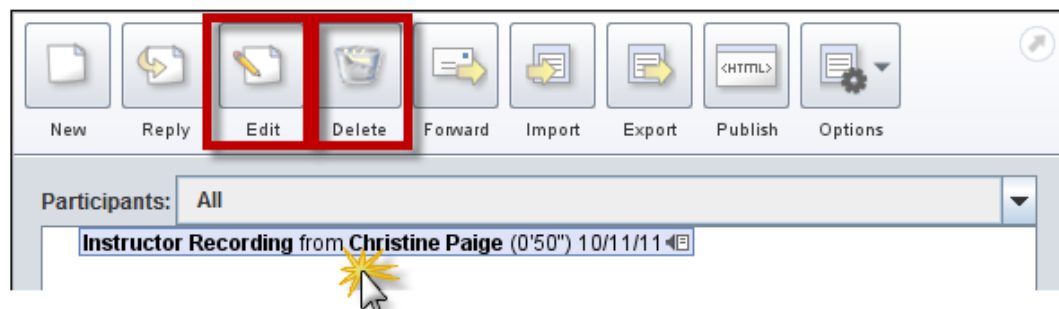
Deleting a Message

Entire threads, as well as single messages, can be deleted from a Voice Board at any time, though note that once deleted, these messages cannot be recovered. This feature is only available to individuals with instructor level privileges. To delete a message or thread, click the desired message or thread in the top half of the Voice Board, followed by the **Delete** button at the top of the Board. A confirmation prompt then appears, asking if you wish to delete the message. Click the **Yes** button to delete the message (deleting a thread also removes all associated replies). Click **No** to cancel.

Forwarding a Message

A single message (including a top-level thread) can be forwarded to an external email address to share this post (perhaps with someone who does not have access to the Voice Board). Instructors always have the ability to forward messages. Students only have access to this feature if the privilege was granted within the feature's settings.

To forward a message, click the desired message or thread in the top half of the Voice Board, followed by the **Forward** button at the top of the Board. A new window then opens. Specify the complete email address(es) of the individual(s) to whom you wish to send your message, separated by a comma or semi-colon. You can add optional text as a note to this forwarded message by clicking and typing in the large text field at the bottom of the window. Click the **Send** button at the bottom of the window when you are ready to forward the message.

Emails are sent to the addresses specified, containing the following:

- All text associated with the Voice Board message

- Any text entered as a note in the Forward window

Forwarded messages contain links to listen to the audio from the post, as well as any associated text. Messages do not contain any attachments.

Saving Message Audio

Audio associated with any message can be downloaded to your hard drive.

To Save Audio

1. Click the desired message from the top half of the Voice Board.

2. In the upper right-hand corner of the Audio applet, click the **Menu** icon (small striped square), followed by **Save as**. A new window appears.

3. Use the **Save In** drop-down menu to select the desired download location.

4. Use the **Files of Type** drop-down box to select the file format you wish to save. Messages can be saved as .wav, .spx, or .mp3. files.

5. Enter the desired name in the **File Name** box.

6. Click the **Save** button. The message audio is saved.
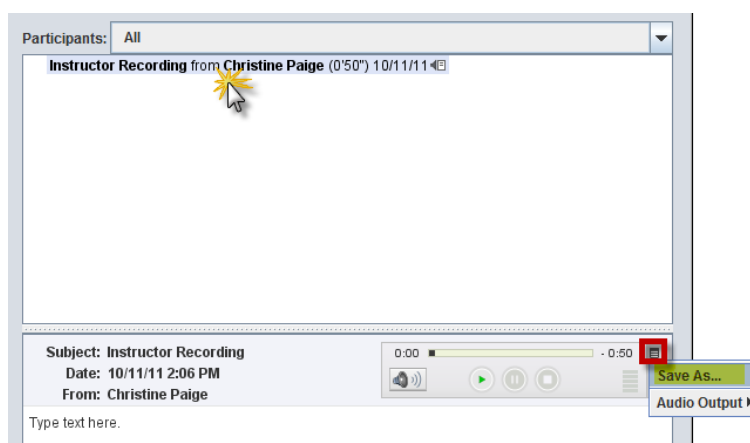
Filtering Posts by User

If you wish to view only the Voice Board posts by a specific user, you can use the filter by user feature. To view only the posts by a specific user, select the user's name from the Participants drop-down menu. User names are listed in alphabetical order. When you select a user's name, all of his or her posts appear, sorted by postdate, and the first post is automatically selected. To view all posts again, select **All** from the Participants drop-down menu.