

OneNote

Scenario

Professor Anderson is teaching an Architectural Design course where students have to work on problem solving, visualization, and written, oral and graphic communication. The course involves field trips to architectural sites where students need to take notes in writing and in the form of audio and video recordings. Until now, students typically struggled to combine their notes from group projects and share them in a way that made them easily accessible and searchable. However, by introducing the students to *OneNote*, Professor Anderson has provided them with a central place to store all of their notes and share them for collaboration. Moreover, by setting up *OneNote* to store the student notebooks on the Microsoft OneDrive cloud storage solution, students can record notes on any device with a *OneNote* app and automatically have them available on all other connected devices. Thus, a student may record audio and video with her iPhone, take written notes on her Macbook Air and even make hand-drawn sketches on her iPad while aggregating it all in *OneNote*.

The students have come to appreciate many of the *OneNote* app features. For example, the function that enables doing searches for spoken words in audio recordings or the OCR feature that recognizes the written text in signs and plaques that students take pictures of.

Professor Anderson also likes that by having students share their *OneNote* notebooks with him, he can keep an eye on student project progress and provide auditory or written feedback outside of class. The Author features also tracks the individual contributions of group members and allows him to investigate further if members of a group complain about the performance from any one member.

1. What is it?

A note-taking application compatible with all major platforms for computers and mobile devices.

2. How does it work?

Users download the application to install on their chosen devices or platforms or sign into the web-based platform in a browser. Notes are collected and organized in Notebooks, which can have different tabs, which, in turn, can have different pages. Notes can be taken by typing on a keyboard or handwriting on touch-enabled devices. Copy-pasting of text and images is easy as is the 'Screen Clipping' feature which lets you capture full or partial screen shots. *OneNote* also allows for audio and video recording and will even index your written notes at the appropriate times in the audio recording. It is also possible to embed Excel and Visio files in your notes and have them update dynamically, just like you can link to documents on the Microsoft OneDrive.

3. Who's doing it?

OneNote seems to mostly be used as a business tool with some teachers and students using it for teaching and learning. In Sammamish High School in Seattle, 950 students and their teachers find it useful for facilitating synchronous feedback, for online collaboration and to help improve teacher feedback to students. The Washington County Career Center, a vocational school in southeast Ohio, is also using the *OneNote Class Notebook* to manage online independent learning by the students when weather forces them to cancel classes.

4. Why is it significant?

The opportunities for student collaboration via apps such as Google Documents and Google Drive is fairly well-known and utilized in many schools from K5 through college. *OneNote* has the advantage that it offers a very comprehensive set of tools that

works on all major mobile and computer-based platforms. Thus, it allows students to take notes, collaborate, and integrate video and voice recording with hand-written and typed notes. Advanced features such as optical character recognition from images and keyword search within audio recordings, not to mention mapping written notes to specific parts of a recording, also lend themselves very well to research projects.

5. What are the downsides?

Microsoft does not guarantee uninterrupted access to *OneNote* or OneDrive, where you may choose to store your notebook files, nor do they provide a guarantee against data being lost in the event of system problems.

OneNote should work with different screen reader technologies, but full functionality cannot be guaranteed. Instructors should always keep accessibility issues in mind when using new online tools like this in their classroom. In case of any doubts or concerns, please contact the relevant offices on campus for advice and assistance.

6. Where is it going?

Since its debut in 2003 Microsoft has regularly updated *OneNote* and expanded its capabilities and features. In addition, Microsoft has released a developer API that allows third party developers to integrate tools into *OneNote*. It appears that few educators or students are aware of this software and associated mobile apps even though it is available for free. However, Microsoft is aggressively targeting the education market with its *OneNote Class Notebook* feature which features LTI integration with several learning management systems and the *OneNote* for Teachers website which provides information on how to use *OneNote* as a teaching tool. Given the great usability and versatility of this software, it is likely to slowly become more used for teaching and learning, particularly in higher education.

7. What are the implications for teaching and learning?

Free, versatile note-taking and collaboration apps are valuable for students and teachers alike. Many students are also likely to benefit from knowing how to use this kind of software once they enter the job market and would benefit from learning how to use tools such as *OneNote*. *OneNote* also provides many useful and advanced features that are difficult to find in other applications, especially free ones. Lastly, Microsoft is a major player in the education field with applications such as Word and Power Point and is actively targeting the education market in its marketing of *OneNote*. Consequently, quality and developer support is likely to be good and the software will likely have good staying power, even though it is free.

8. Where can I find out more?

Visit the *OneNote* website at www.onenote.com, particularly the Students section at www.onenote.com/Students.

Visit the *OneNote* for Teachers website at <http://onenoteforteachers.com/>.

Read the article [How to Use OneNote at School: 10 Tips for Students & Teachers](#) on the [MakeUseOf](#) website.

You may also contact Jacob E. Larsen (jlarsen@iastate.edu) in IT Services to discuss how *OneNote* can be used with your students.

Additional [legal information](#).