

# Personal Learning Environment

Jessica McClintock – COM 303 Research Poster

@jesmcclintock – Use #com435 to engage in the conversation

## What is a PLE?

Personal Learning Environments (PLE) are systems that help learners take control of and manage their own learning environments and systems. PLEs can be a desktop application and/or composed of one or more web-based services. Individual learners are the center and are connected to the information and communities of Web 2.0.

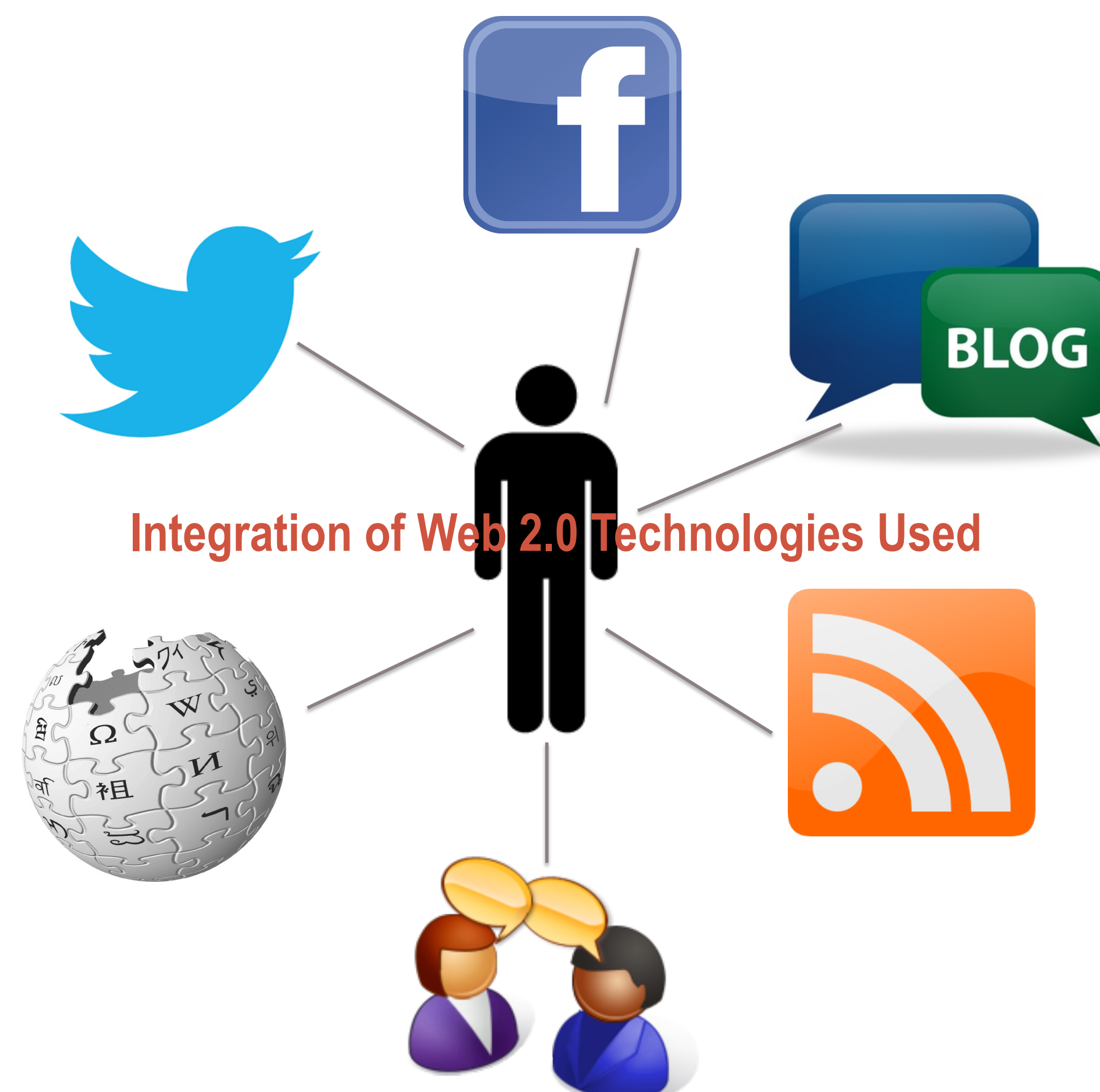
### Provides support with:

- setting personal learning goals
- managing content and process of learning
- communicate with others in the process of learning



wiseGEEK

## Impact on Individual



### E-Learning 2.0

- One node in a web of content is connected to other nodes that are services of content creation used by other students
- A personal learning center, where content is reused and remixed according to the student's own needs and interests
- It's a collection of interoperating applications – an environment rather than a system

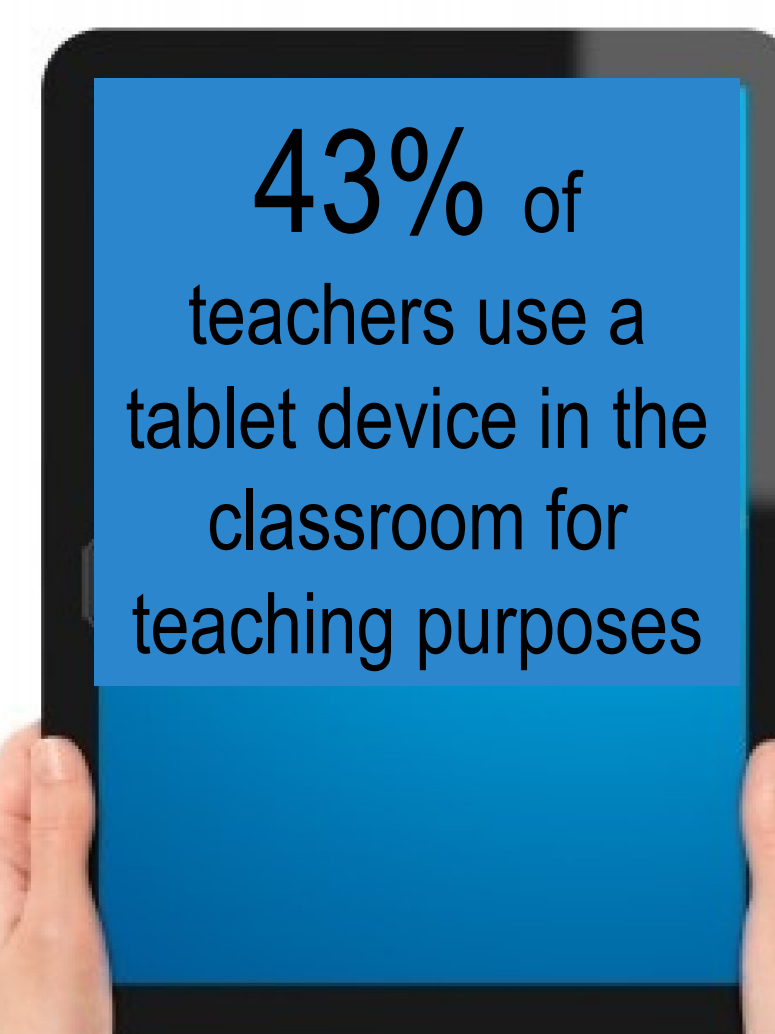
## Online Resources for Teachers and Students

76%

of teachers and students use online resources to submit their assignments



By developing Wikis, engaging in online discussions and editing work collaborations on platforms such as Google Docs



43% of teachers use a tablet device in the classroom for teaching purposes

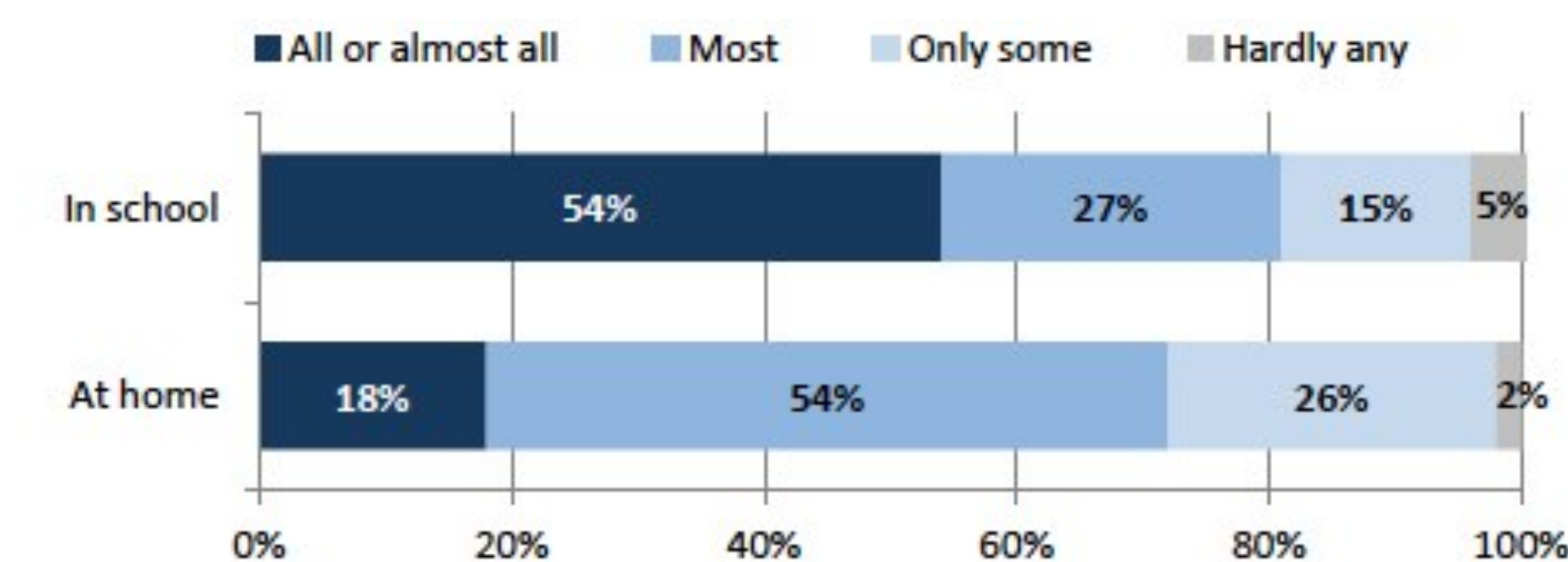
Lower income students have sufficient less access to digital tools that are needed than higher income students.

83%

Of teachers agree that "the amount of information available online today is overwhelming for most students"

90% named Google their #1 search engine

54% of AP and NWP teachers say all or almost all of their students have sufficient access to digital tools while IN SCHOOL, but just 18% say the same is true AT HOME



Source: Teacher data from the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Online Survey of Teachers, March 7 to April 23, 2012, n=2,462 middle and high school teachers.

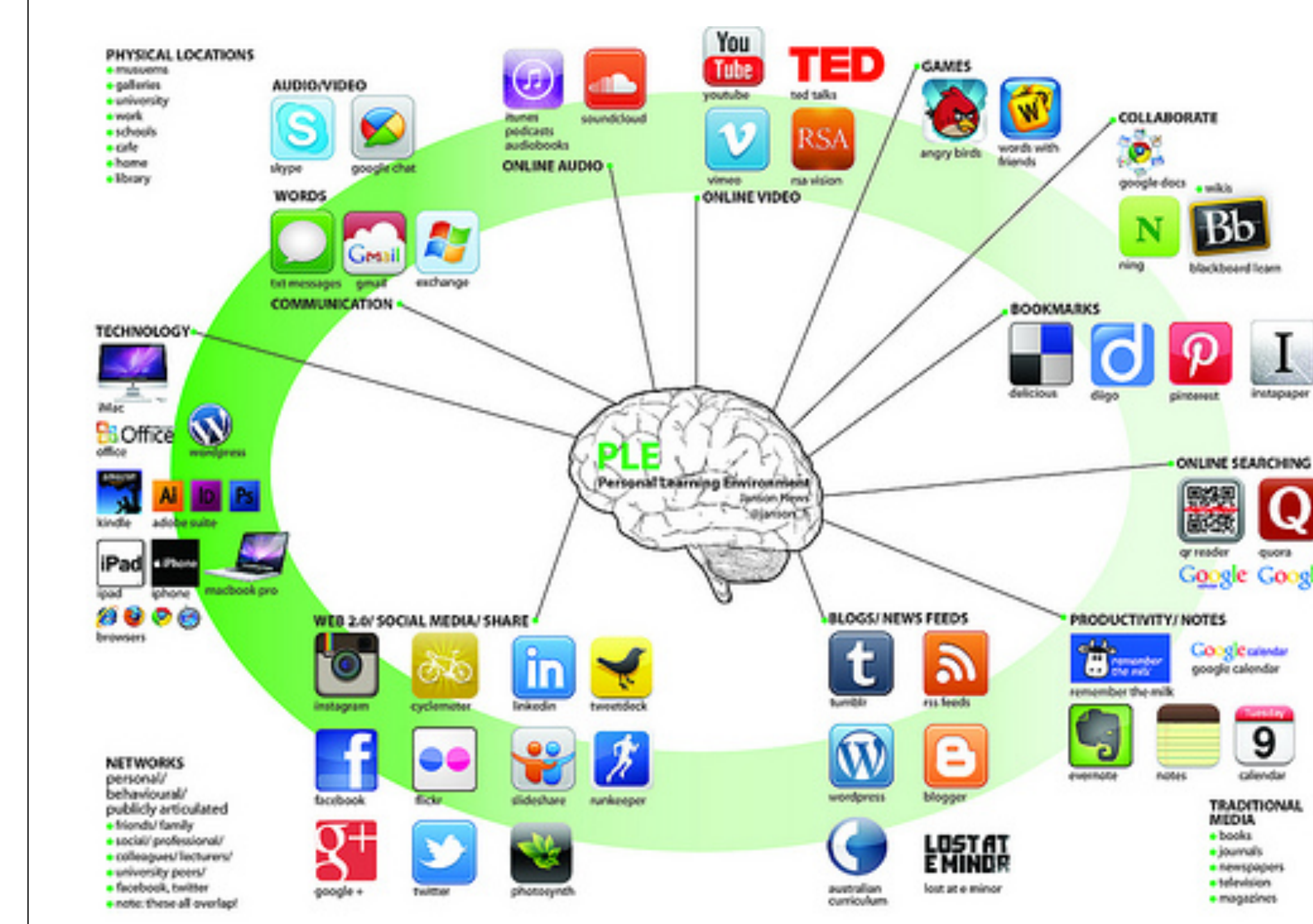
## Positive Implications

- Creating a learner-centric environment because the learner controls everything in their environment
  - Control the look, feel, operation and appeal of the PLE
- Creating a diverse environment involving work, play and study
- Quickly adjust to changing situations
  - Not situational learning as traditional courses
  - Can easily be changed by administrator
- "Learning by doing" activities
  - Taught how to construct, regulate and control their own learning and thus becoming lifelong learners
- Learners can use PLEs to interact with their classmates and others throughout the world
- Allows self-directed learners think for themselves rather than participate in groupthink by having learners have a public voice on topics

## Negative Implications

- More responsibility is placed on the learner
- Technologies are not always stable
- Overall lack of confidence that PLEs are as effective as formal learning environments
- Technologies might be hard for teachers and learners to overcome if they don't have the right resources available to them or are technophobes
- There are numerous passwords and user identifications to memorize, variable bandwidth needs, and choices that must be standardized
- Some technologies are open-sourced while others are proprietary
- Instructor must take charge and design the PLE as standard for all students and not allow one student capability to a different source

## Example of a PLE



## Future for PLEs

- Must work collaboratively and rely on personal networks for information
- Start sorting the authoritative from the noise when doing research
- University campuses need to make campus specific PLEs for their student's use only
- Mobile access needs to be more prominent so that PLE users can have instant access at any location
- Twitter hashtags need to be communicated to everyone so that the same handle is used throughout the communication
- YouTube and Skype utilized as well as other video sources for instant visual and hearing communication

## Applies to Lecture

- Search engines
  - Must learn how to search effectively in order to access information needed
- Social Networks and their communities
  - PLEs lack the face-to-face interaction received in a formal classroom setting
  - Communities build relationships and are founded on a common ground of sharing
  - Various ways to connect online making the possibilities endless
- Collaborative Knowledge Protection
  - Google Docs is a tool frequently used by learners in PLEs to collaborate on material
  - Do not have to worry about the barriers of time and space due to the new technologies available making it possible to communicate as such
- Immersed Virtual Reality
  - Mixed Reality takes places with PLEs due to the virtual reality being one part of the learning process, real environment when interacting with teachers and peers face-to-face and augmented reality that supplements the visualization for the learner
  - Bringing learners to environments that are historical, don't exist any more or cost too much to visit so that they can be present to visualize the context and meanings

## Who uses this now?

University of Mary Washington in Virginia is an advocate of PLEs. Students are encouraged to utilize UMW Blogs, which is a WordPress multiuser publishing platform that the university established. It offers flexible web spaces so that students can present their work from the web and share it through the university's website while collaborating with others.

If a school is implementing PLEs into the learning environment, websites should be established where students can keep their personal reflections and digital content. This way they can return to it, share it with others on the web and even come back to it for other purposes. Other websites that promote the storing, sharing and connecting of information that PLE users should be familiar with include StumbleUpon, Flickr, YouTube, and Wikis.

## References

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