First off, great reflection Kim. I sort of wish now that I hadn't read it because I feel like my own response will suffer by comparison. You did a fantastic job of highlighting some of the weaknesses of using a LMS and I agree wholeheartedly with your position on using the technology that students are already using. I would suggest that when it comes to technology the popularity of a given application is a good indication of its overall usefulness. I don’t understand why your colleague wouldn’t embrace applications popular with your students. There is nothing inherently better about LMS courses than non LMS course. This isn’t a broccoli vs. cotton candy dichotomy.

Tell your colleague this story- back in the mid-1980s some forward thinking educators imagined that there might be some educational opportunities created by a new invention known as the “personal computer”. They managed to convince school boards across Ontario to purchase some of these devices at great cost (approximately $2500 each). At the time the most popular machines were created by IBM and used an operating system known as DOS (precursor to Windows), but these were seen as business machines. Rather than use these machines, they chose to equip schools across the province with Icon computers which were designed specifically with educators in mind.

The result? Icons were introduced across the province when I was in Grade 7. By the time I got to Grade 11 they were being replaced by IBM/DOS compatible machines. I had a lot of fun playing on the Icons and I learned a lot from them (Northwest Fur Trader and Deep Sea Fishing were my favourite games) but at the end of the day, students aren’t just acquiring knowledge for its own sake. They have to grow up and get jobs and be productive adults. Just because something meshes nicely with the conventions of educational institutions doesn’t mean that it will or should be embraced by teachers and students. This is why I am skeptical of the potential of many of the LMS. Certainly some will get it right, but many others will go the way of the Icons. We should be using applications that our students use and are going to continue to use after their schooling is over. That doesn’t sound like LMS to me.

Having said that, the one problem that I have found with this course and with online communication in general is that there are too many mailboxes to check and too much information coming at me all at once. As it stands now I have 4 email addresses that I have to check semi-regularly so that I don’t miss important announcements. Then there are the Google + notifications and the Twitter feed. The one problem I see with the non-LMS toolkit is that it requires more organization, more accounts and more passwords. I feel that to be successful teaching and learning online I need to find a way to slow the torrent of information down into a more manageable trickle.