

Using Gather.Town to Re-Imagine Interaction in Virtual and Hybrid Language Learning

PRESENTERS

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE



Virtual and Hybrid Language Learning



Re-Imagine Interaction



Using Gather.Town



Recommendations and Resources

DEMONSTRATIONS

- Sharing persistent "third spaces"
- Creating compelling experiences
- Reclaiming classroom activities

What can a language classroom look like?



Rigid desks in pairs
and a few computers

[source](#)



No desks and no
electronics at all

[source](#)

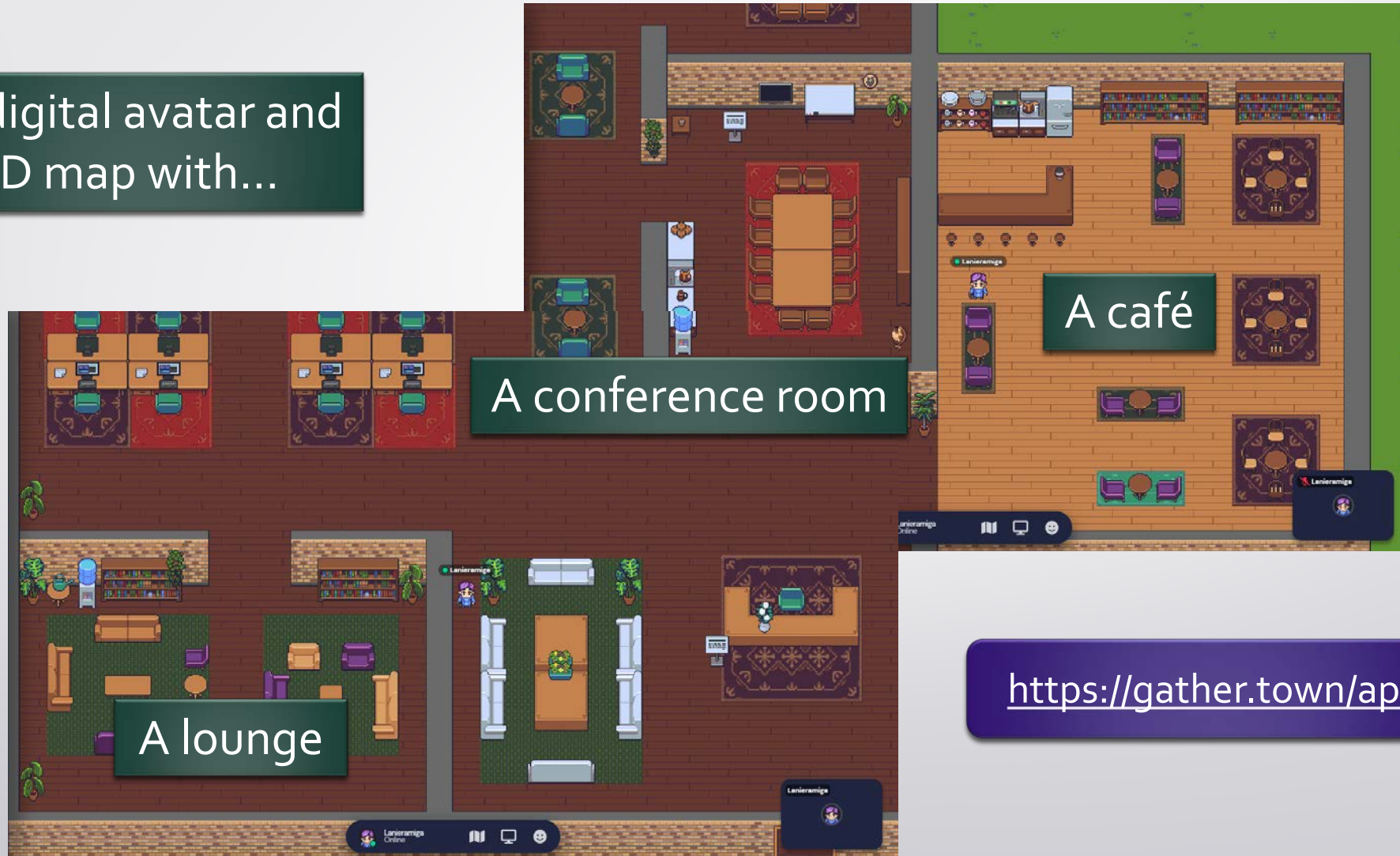


Chairs on wheels for
any configuration


[source](#)

What can a language classroom look like?

A digital avatar and
a 2D map with...



<https://gather.town/app>



Using Gather.Town
to Re-Imagine Interaction
in **Virtual and Hybrid**
Language Learning

Shared Space in F2F Classrooms



Course Content

Interaction

Assignments and Tasks

Shared "Space" in Online Courses

Learning Management System

Course Content

- Content Delivery
- Feedback
- Grades

Interaction

- Lectures
- Breakout Rooms

Share
Materials

Manage
Tasks

Software and
Applications

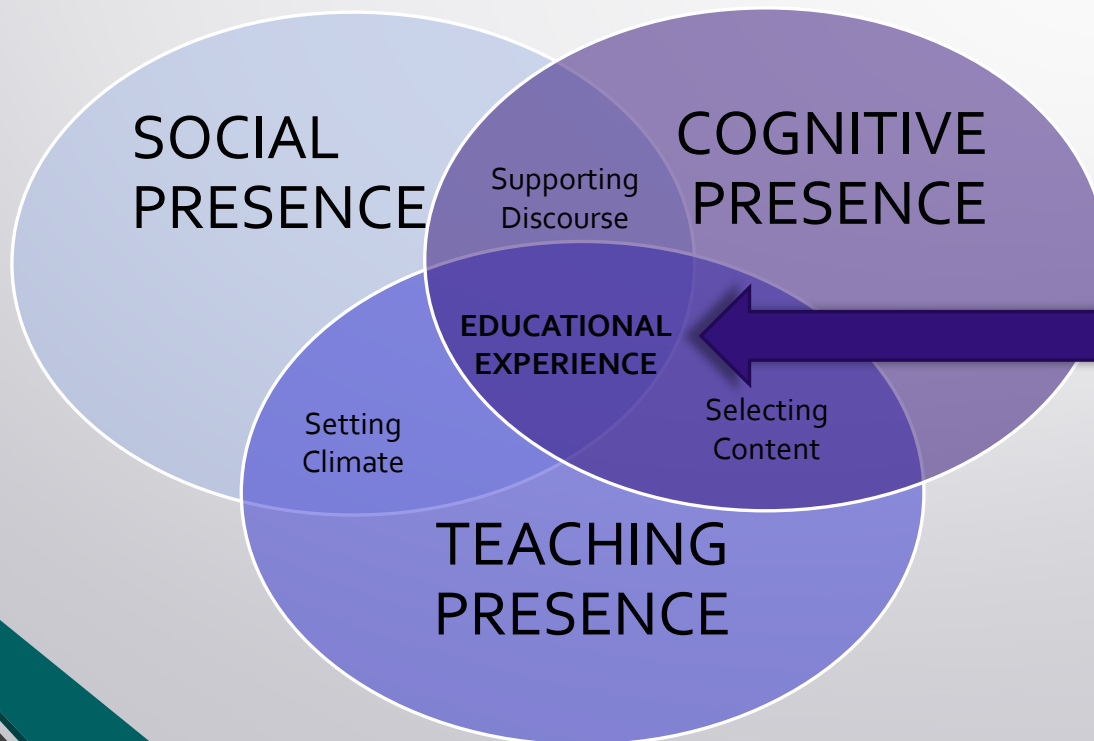
Video
Conferencing
Tool

- Engaging Material
- Assessments
- Content Reinforcement

Virtual and Hybrid Language Learning

Social Presence & Interaction

Three aspects of engagement in an online course or program

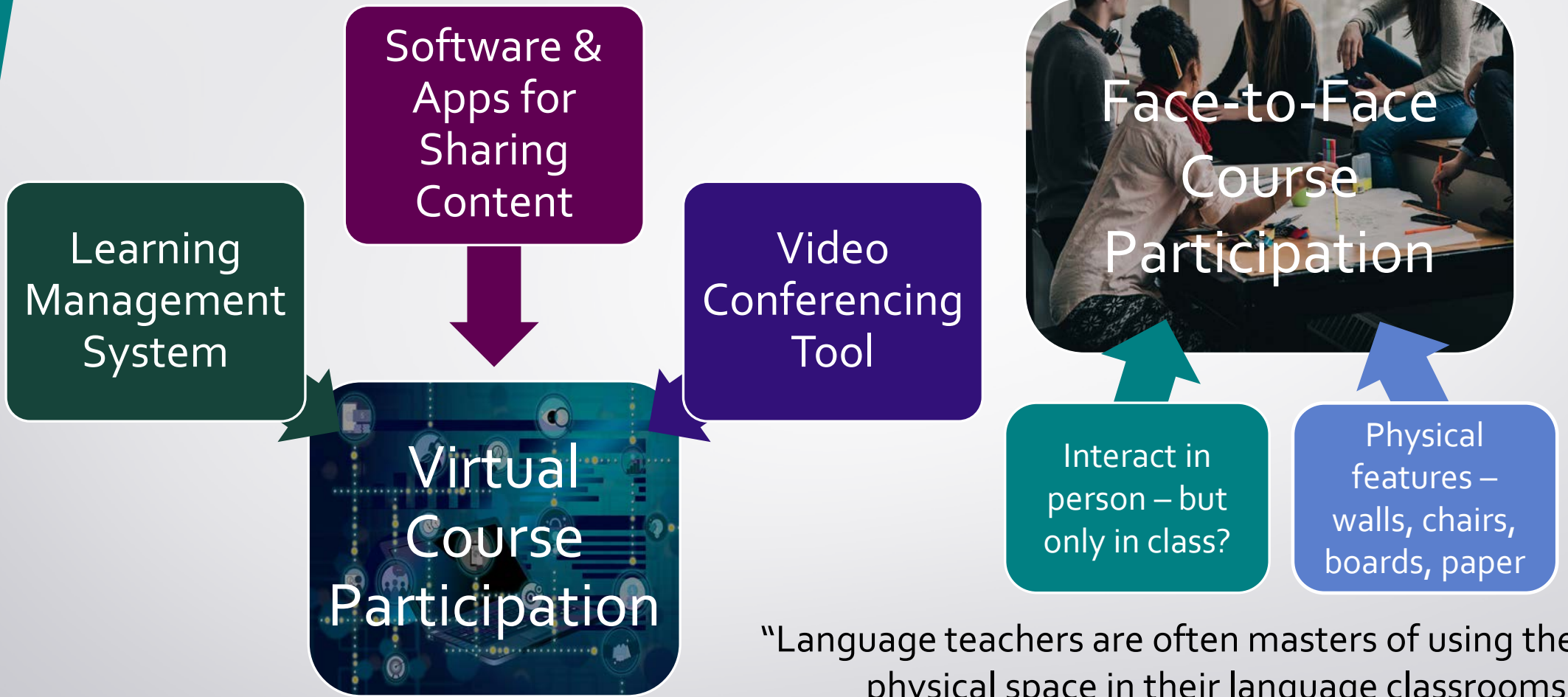


Interaction is essential to learning – in language classes and even in content courses – but ...

Why is it so hard in virtual learning contexts?

Creating the educational experience is like creating a world

Adapted from
Figure 1: Elements of an educational experience
in Rourke, et al. (2001)



“Language teachers are often masters of using the physical space in their language classrooms, rearranging furniture, groups, and artifacts to facilitate meaningful encounters with and among learners” (Guillén, Sawin, & Avineri, 2020).

Learning Management System

Software & Apps for Sharing Content

Video Conferencing Tool

Virtual Course Participation

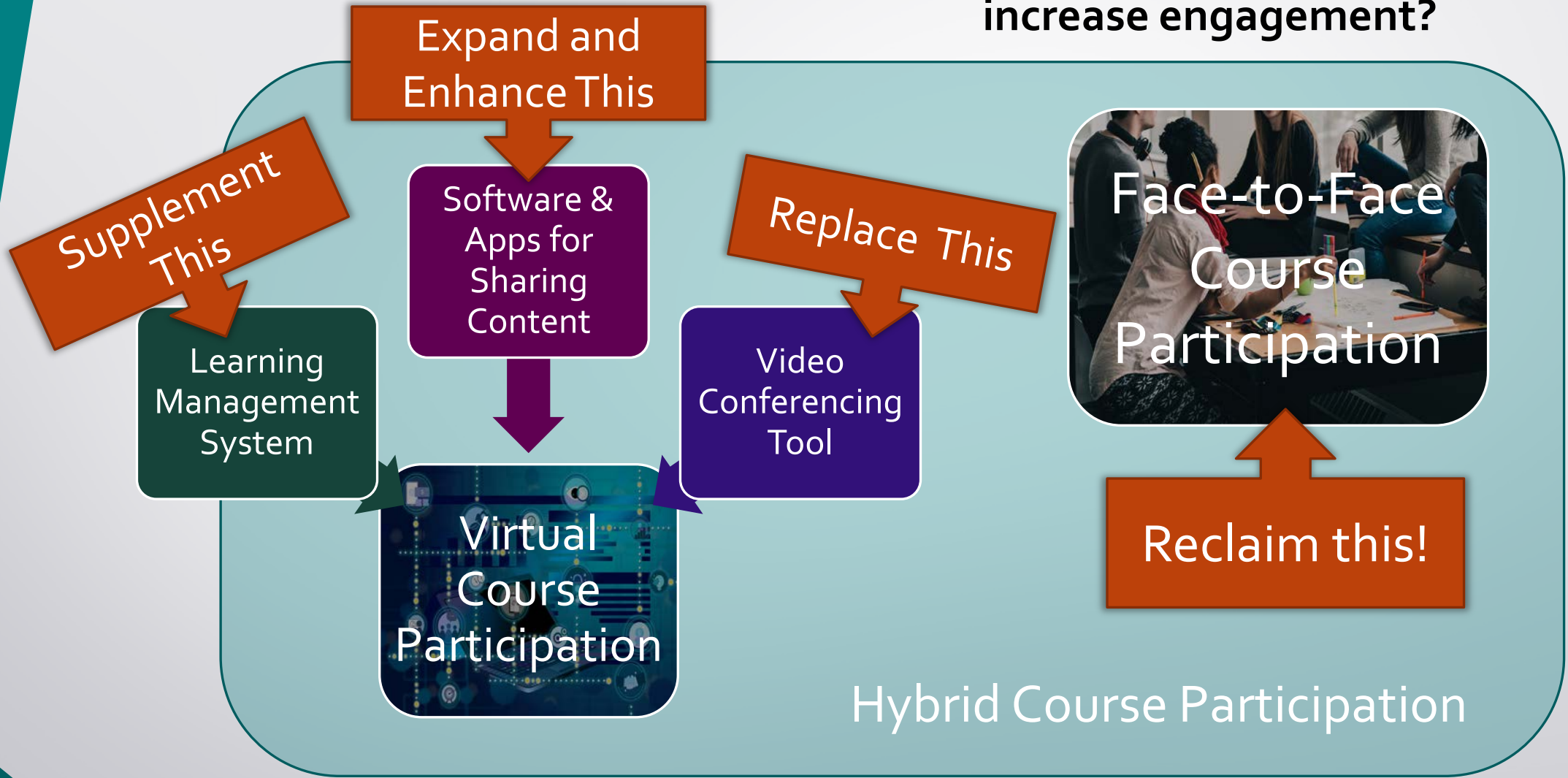


Interact in person – but only in class?

Physical features – walls, chairs, boards, paper

Hybrid Course Participation

How can using Gather.Town increase engagement?





Using Gather.Town

to Re-Imagine Interaction
in Virtual and Hybrid
Language Learning

Using Gather.Town

What is Gather.Town anyway?

Spatial chat software

Video conferencing

Text chat

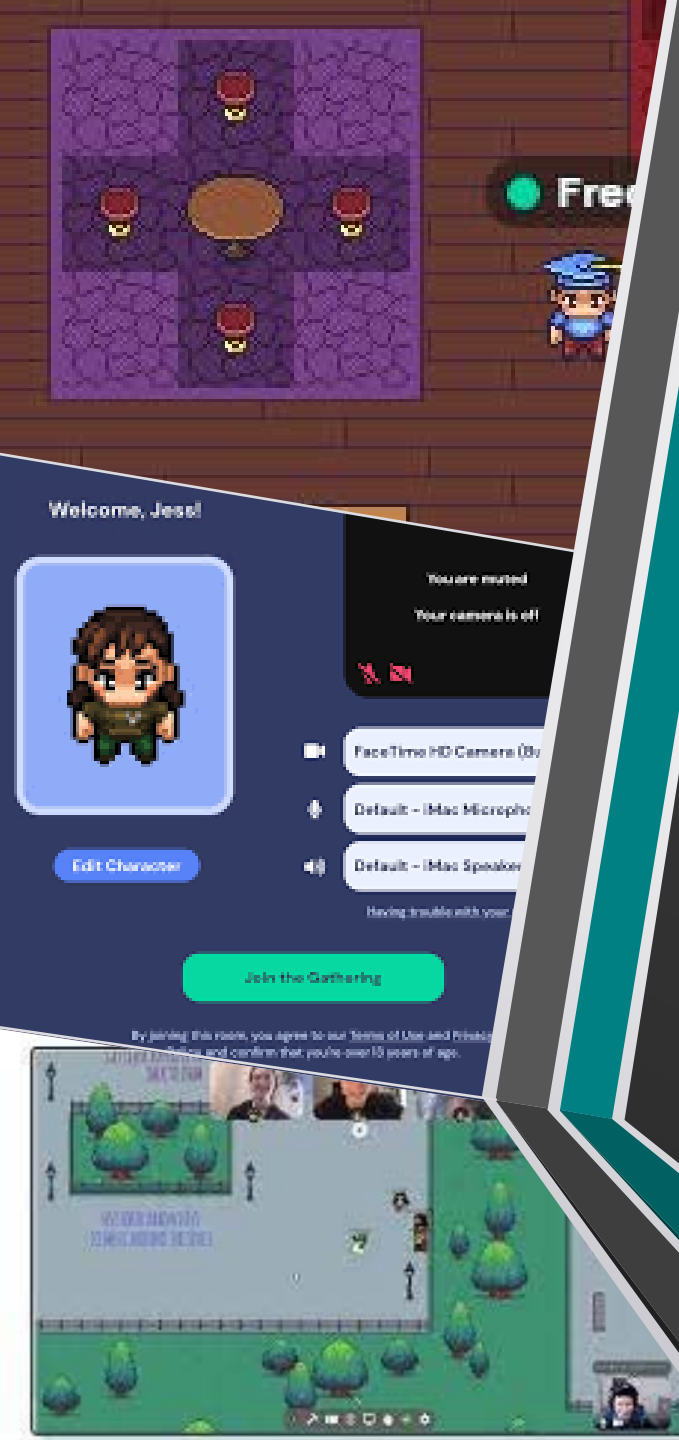
Game-like 2D environment

Personal avatar to explore it

Customization of space and objects



Walk up to someone to share video.



Using Gather.Town

“Technology serves best when facilitating human connection, allowing learners to engage more intimately with ... those distant in space, time, and culture”
(Guillén, Sawin, & Avineri, 2020).



Want to grab a coffee?



“I like this platform because it is a better alternative than other video conferencing tools (like Zoom) for those days where most of our activities are interactive and could be otherwise constrained by only using breakout rooms”
(Saez-Fajardo, 2021).

Virtual Learning in Gather.Town

Reclaiming Interaction in the Online Space

Grouping

- Difficult to place students into groups

Autonomy

- Difficult to give students freedom to choose groups and manage tasks.

Monitoring

- Difficult to move between groups to monitor group work.

Engagement

- Difficult to keep all students active in task.

Virtual Learning in Gather.Town

Grouping

Students can choose groups and move among them on their own

Autonomy

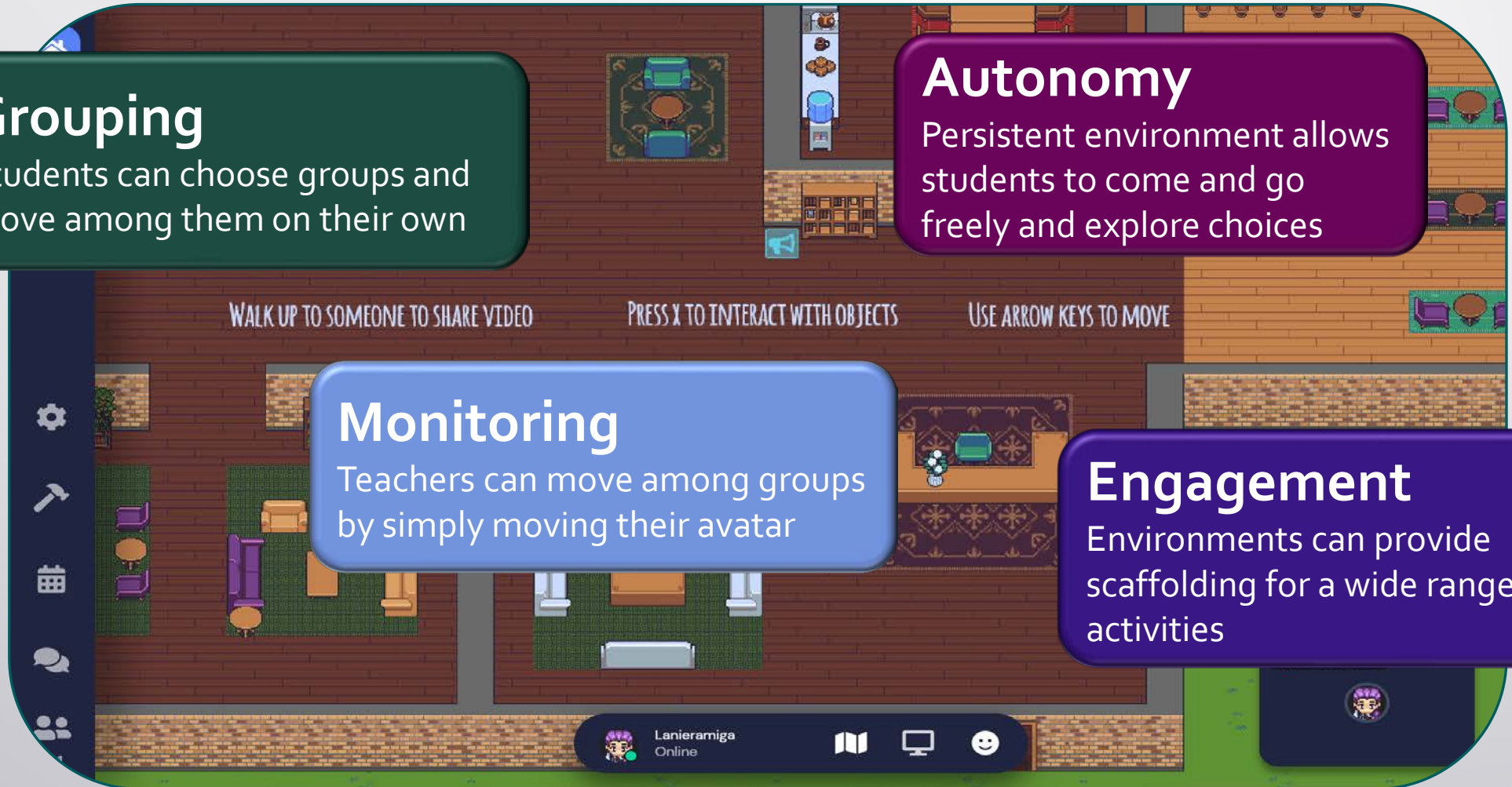
Persistent environment allows students to come and go freely and explore choices

Monitoring

Teachers can move among groups by simply moving their avatar

Engagement

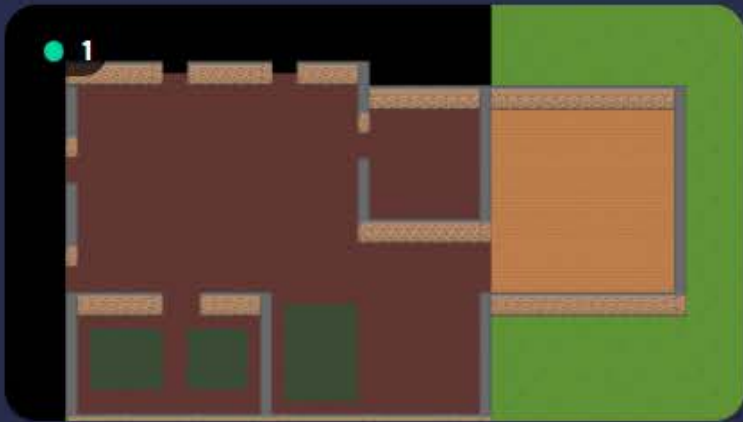
Environments can provide scaffolding for a wide range of activities



Last Visited

Created Spaces

Search



virtual-interaction-ft

Today

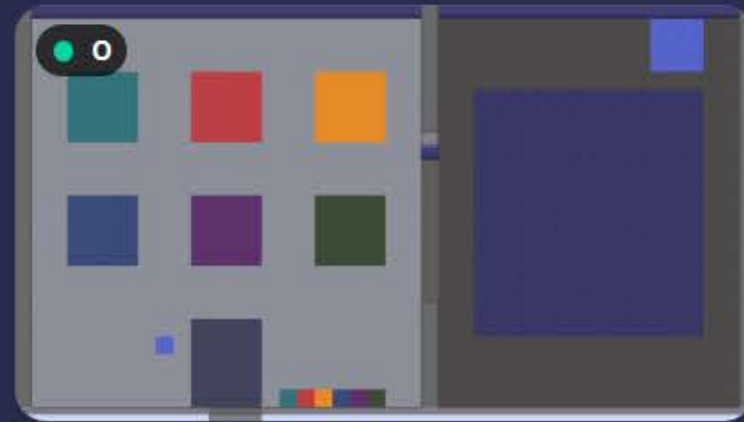


Social Work Space

Today

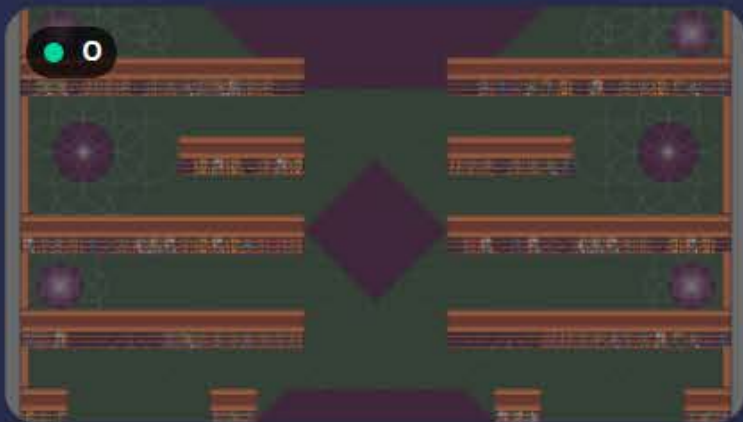
Meet with social work students, practitioners, and researchers around the world

COWORKING SOCIAL ENGLISH



classroom-ft-1121

Today



Mystic-Wells-21

Today



Clue Experience

2d ago



Flex Conference

2d ago

Creating Spaces in Gather.Town

Creating Spaces

Start with a ready-made "template":

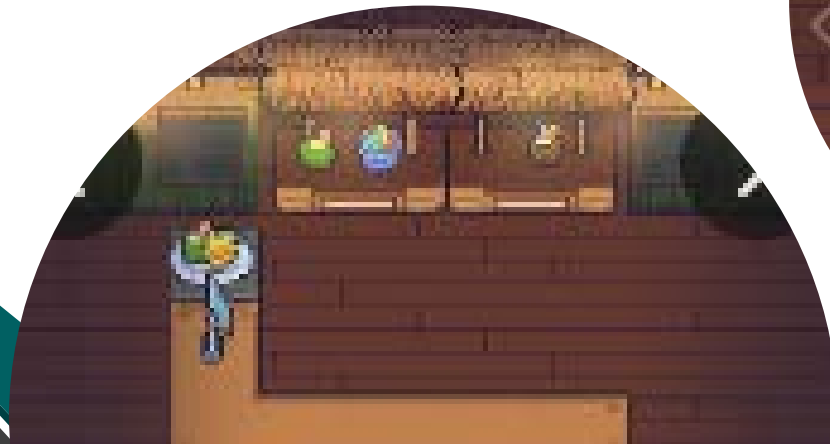
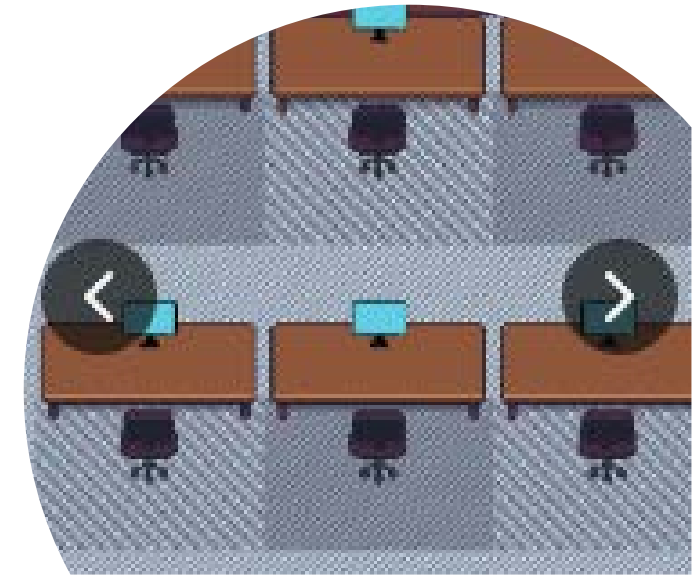
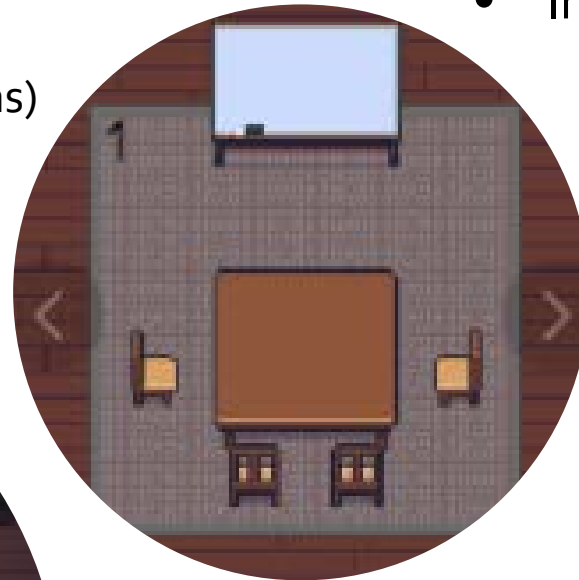
- Office Spaces
- Seasonal Spaces (e.g., Christmas)
- Social Settings (e.g., Restaurant)
- Conference Spaces
- Educational Settings (e.g., Classrooms)
- Fantasy Environments



- Log in on a computer
- Use Chrome or Mozilla

- Invite others (e.g.):

<https://gather.town/invite?token=UCLSvWbQ5PkyuwgMiz1DN1By27XfCqIn>

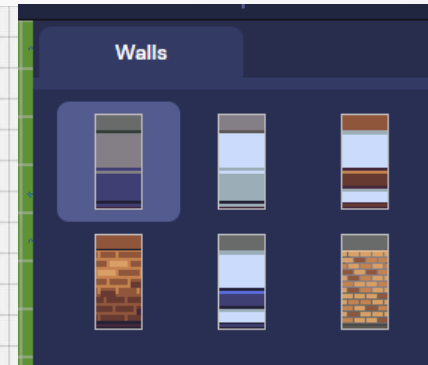
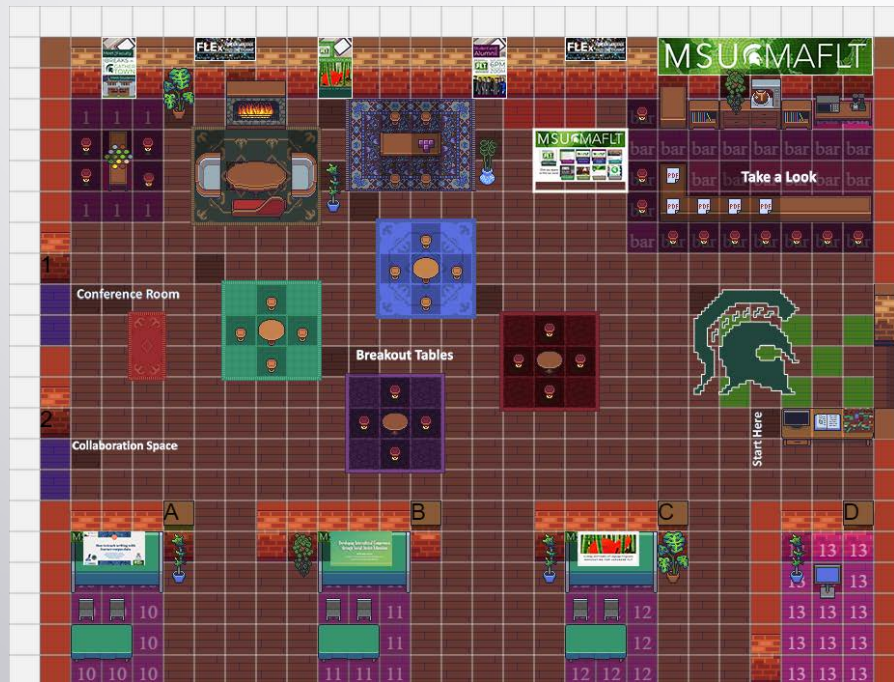
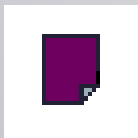


Using Gather.Town

Mapmaking

Customize your new space if you want – but leave the super-detailed visual designs to the experts!

Pixel objects
32 x 32 px

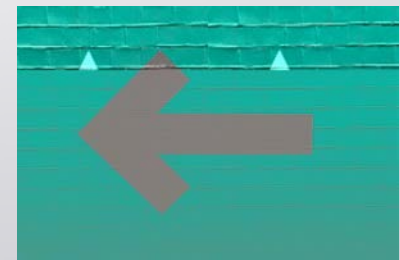
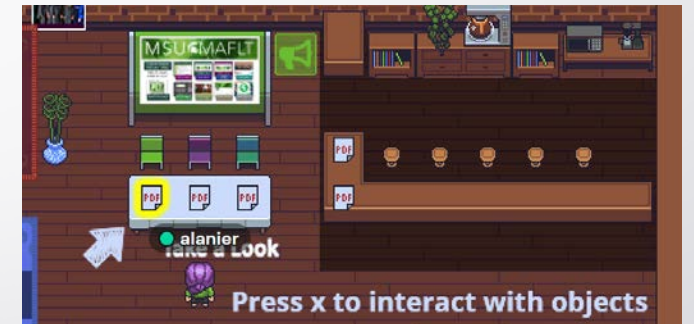
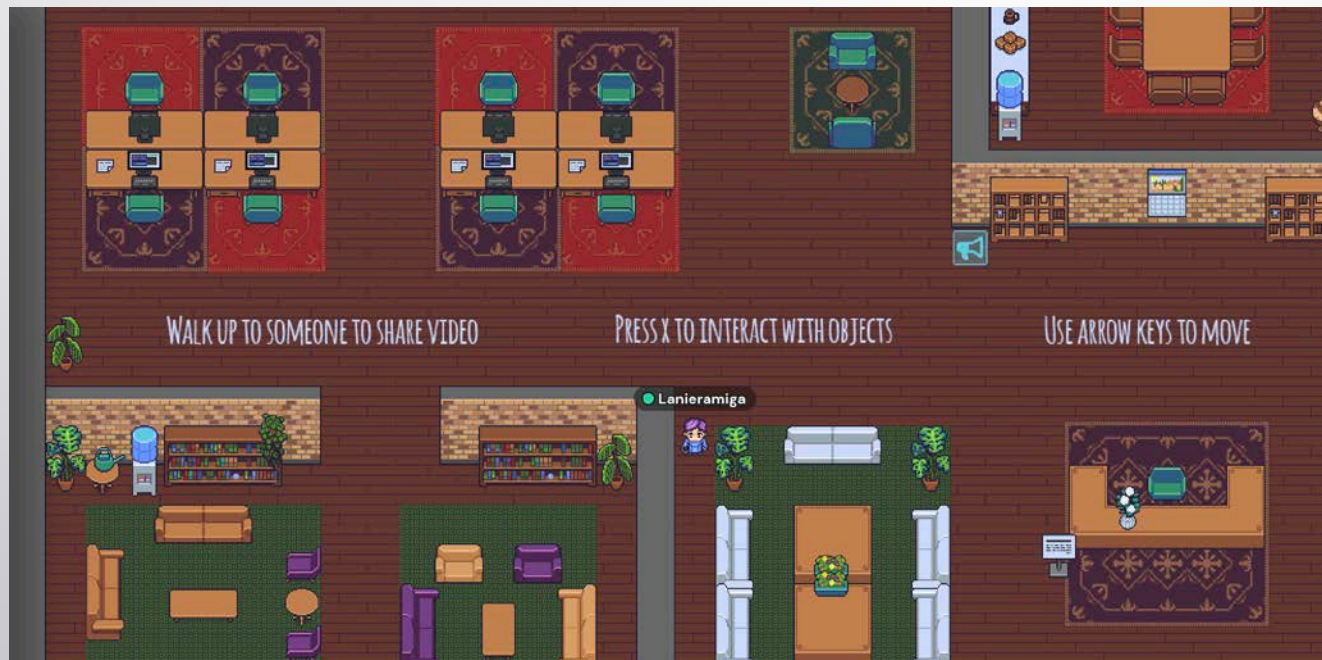


Editing in the
Mapmaker

Using Gather.Town

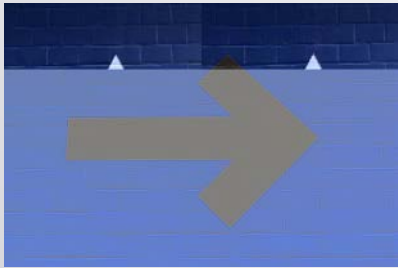
Wayfinding

Make your space user-friendly – add instructions, labels, and signs

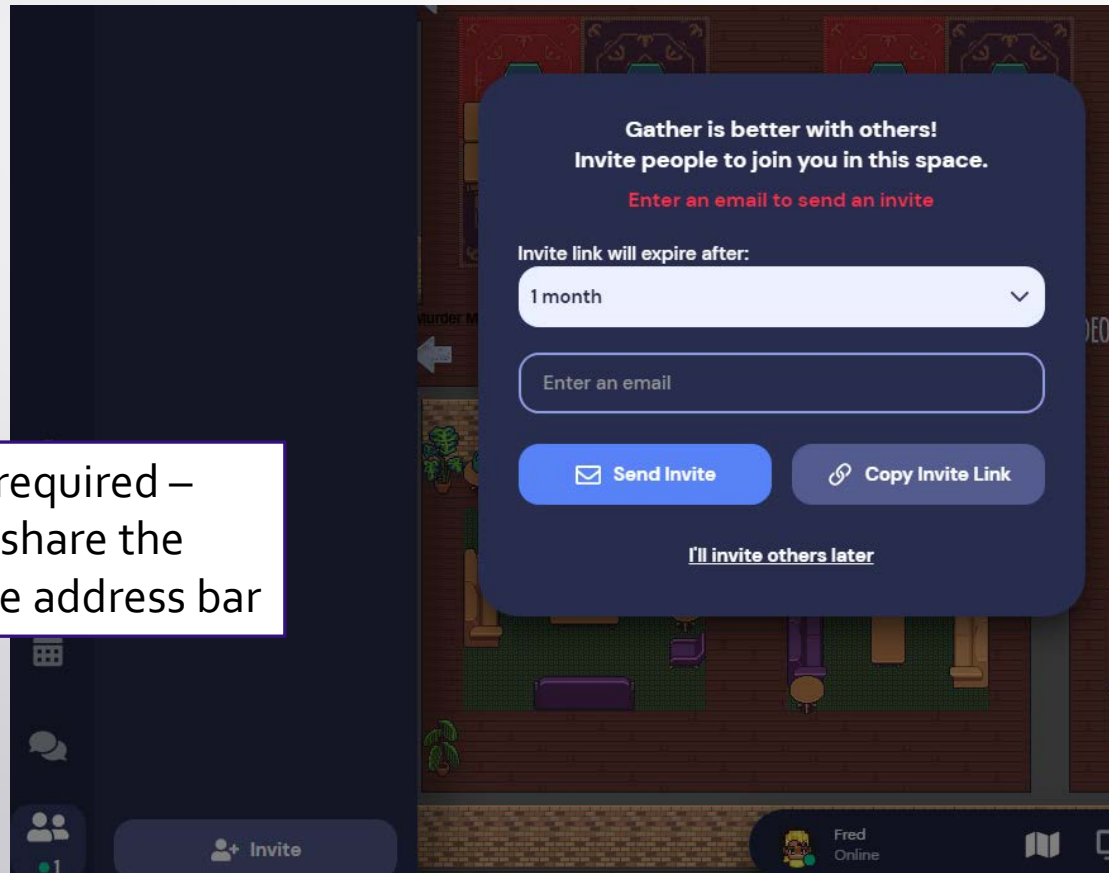


Using Gather.Town

Inviting & Guiding Students




Invite is not required – you can just share the URL from the address bar



Up to 25 at a time for free

DO Send Invite if you want to add an editor

DO Send Invite if you want access to end after a certain time



Using Gather.Town to
Re-Imagine Interaction
in Virtual and Hybrid
Language Learning

Re-Imagine Interaction

What we can re-create and discover

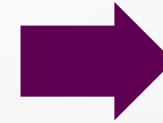
Persistent Spaces

- Create a “third space” where students can meet and collaborate



Embedded Experiences

- Offer experiences that inspire language learning



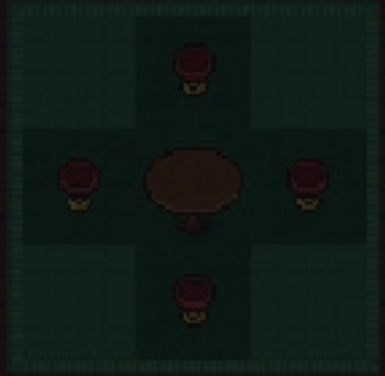
Classroom Activities

- Translate your activities from physical to virtual spaces



Gather.Town Demonstrations

Conference Room



Public Tables



Fred



Press x to interact



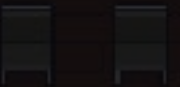
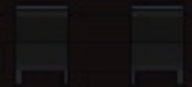
Start Here

Persistent Space

Collaboration Space



C



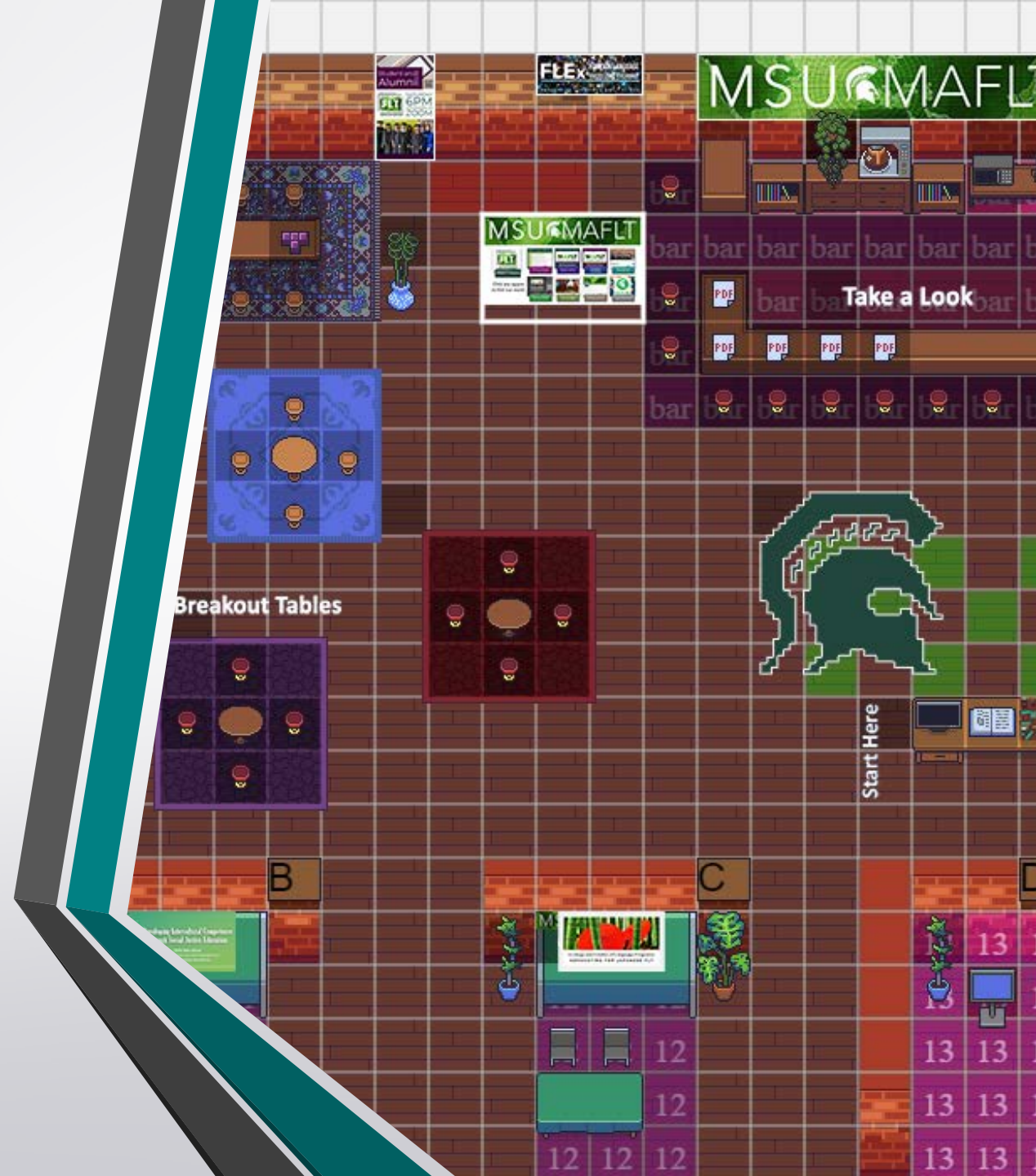
Persistent Spaces...

Provide learners with a common ground for socializing

Can embed instructional material much like other LMS

Can promote a sense of community

Can provide learners with a sense of autonomy in online courses





SCAVENGER
HUNT

MYSTERY
MANSION

ESCAPE
ROOM

Unique Experiences

I wa
whe
Tom

Experiences...



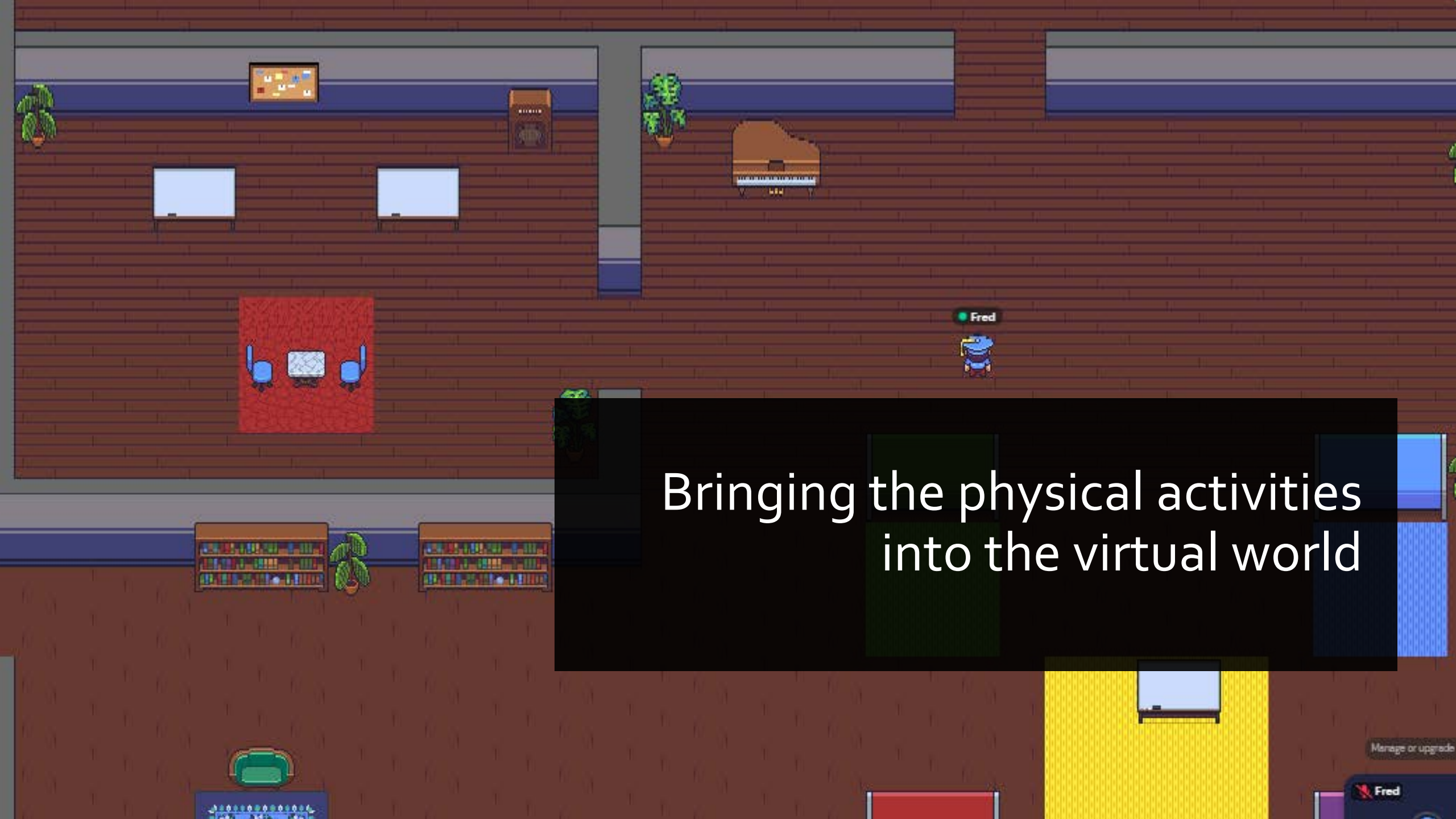
Allow students to explore unique worlds



Embed language learning into the digital environments



Can be leveraged to promote in-class communication



Fred

Bringing the physical activities
into the virtual world

Manage or upgrade


Fred



Speed Dating

Information-Gap Activities

Jigsaw Activities



Using Gather.Town to Re-Imagine Interaction in Virtual and Hybrid Language Learning

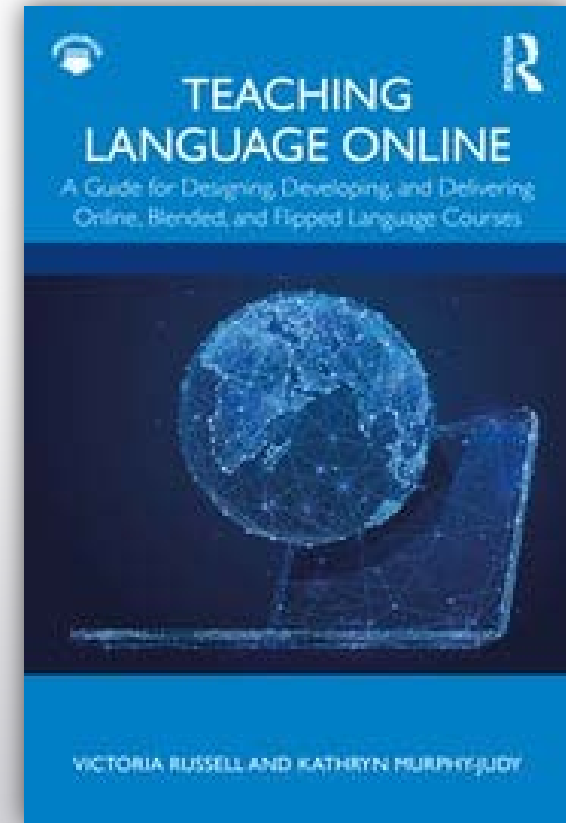
**RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR YOU**

Recommendations for Building & Teaching in Gather.Town

“Any tool or application may be used provided that the following elements are present in the course:

- (1) learners receive ample comprehensible input in the target language,
- (2) learners have opportunities to produce output in the target language, and
- (3) learners have interactions with others in the target language”

(Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021).



www.routledge.com

Recommendations for Building & Teaching in Gather.Town

DON'T

- Don't go crazy with editing spaces at the beginning
- Don't access Gather.Town with a phone or tablet
- Don't clutter the spaces with objects
- Don't use Gather.Town for lectures or lengthy whole-class activities
- Don't count on video or audio recording the whole event or small groups (unless you use another tool also)
- Don't link out to other apps or websites much – use what you can build into the space

DO

- Rely on the Gather.Town spaces that are already created for you
- Keep the spaces small
- Remind invitees to use Chrome or Mozilla
- Create routines around entering Gather.Town
- Take advantage of the students' mobility
- Allow students to become co-creators of the space
- Design synchronous activities that involve small groups, choices, and 2-way exchanges of information
- Design asynchronous activities that make use of information found within Gather.Town

Last Visited

Created Spaces

Search



1

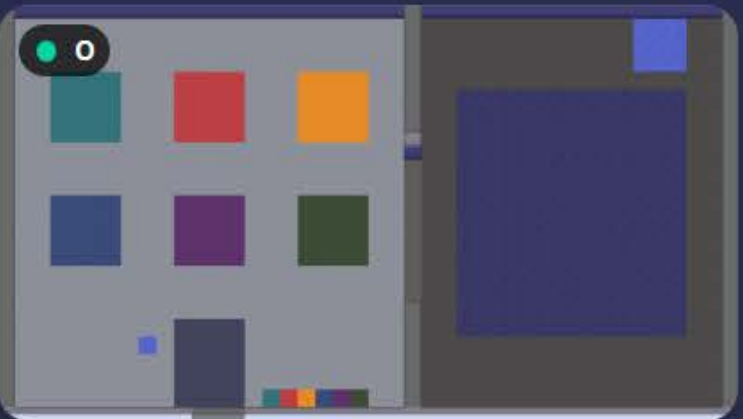
Click here to enter our demo space

virtual-interaction-fft Today



0 Info

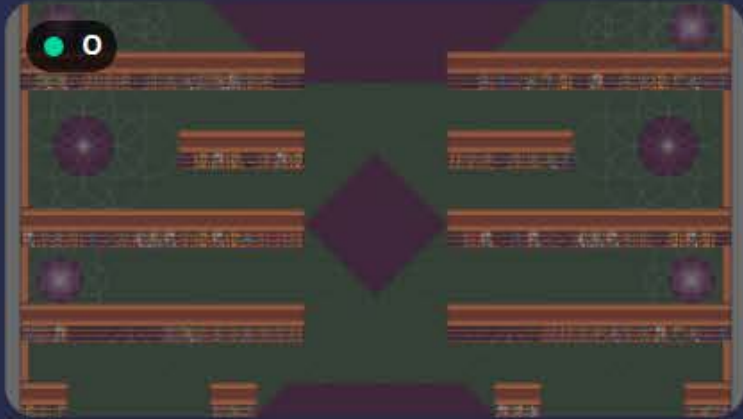
Social Work Space Today



0

classroom #111 Today

Thanks for Joining Us!
What questions do you have?



0

Mystic-Wells-21 Today



0

Clue Experience 2d ago



Flex Conference 2d ago

About the Presenters



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MASTER OF ARTS



AND CERTIFICATE

Innovative.
International.
Intentionally online.

<https://maflt.cal.msu.edu/faculty>

Gather.Town How-To Materials

- [Gather Website - Help and Training](#)
- [Community of Gather Users](#)
- **Gather Intro Video:**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JePchzu_USM&t=4s
- **Using the MapMaker:**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QxXzCcV_xhE

Spatial Chat in FLT MAG

- “SpatialChat – Mingle Activities and Virtual Parties” (Donnally Quinn & Lavolette, 2020) - <https://fltmag.com/spatialchat-mingle-activities-virtual-parties/>
- “GatherTown Brings Mingle Activities to Online Language Teaching” (Saez-Fajardo, 2021) - <https://fltmag.com/gather-town-mingle/>
- “These are a Few of My Favorite Tools: Choosing the Right Tech for the Right Task” (Henshaw, 2021) - <https://fltmag.com/favorite-tools-choosing-tech/>

References and Resources

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