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Facilitating Book Clubs in Asynchronous Graduate Classes

INTRODUCTION

- Book clubs have been shown to promote professional collaboration among preservice and practicing teachers (Burbank et al., 2010).
- Books clubs focus on the exchange of ideas and offer opportunities to develop community of practice (Kietzmann et al., 2013; Wegner, 1998).
- Asynchronous online graduate education classes do not always have a develop a community of practice among the students.
- One challenge of online education is students feel isolated from the instructor and other students (Bolliger & Inan, 2012; Rovai, 2002; Shieh et al., 2008; Zembylas et al., 2008).
- By implementing book club with the help of a video discussion board, it was our goal to create such communities.

Future Plans & Advice

- Can be modified for undergraduate students or face-to-face classrooms.
- Monitor the size of your class!
- Classes smaller than 10 students, students may need to identify first and second choices to ensure all books have at least two readers.
- With larger classes, may need to discussion groups for more popular titles.
- Ideal size for online discussion groups is 4-6 students.
- We plan to continue expanding this throughout our courses.

How it Works

Book Discussion Groups

- Students choose from three popular press books and are assigned to discussion groups of people reading the same title.
- On Mondays, each group was assigned a prompt and group members responded via video discussion board.
- Group members were also expected to respond to at least two others in their group.
- After the groups have completed their set of weekly prompts, everyone was assigned a presentation group.

Book Presentation Groups

- The presentation groups consisted of three to four students.
- Each group was jigsawed and all titles were represented.
- Each member was given 10 minutes to discuss their book on the video discussion board. They provided a brief overview of the title and discussed key ideas and topics that influenced professional practice.
- After the presentations, they were asked to respond to their groupmates' presentations.

Results & Implications

- The use of video discussion allowed students to have more robust and in-depth conversations than traditional written discussions.
- The video helped students feel like they were having an authentic discussion with classmates. Many running conversations unfolded in the comments.
- The presentation groups allowed students to hear about and learn from each title associated with the class.
- Many students comment on how they felt like the developed a community of practice through the video discussions.
- At the end of the class, many students identify book club as a highlight and want to integrate into their professional settings.
- The freedom to select a title was important to students for a variety of reasons.
- It was helpful to have a brief overview of the book club process and expectations at the start, so students understand what they are building towards.
- To better facilitate discussions, have clear expectations regarding a timeline for posting and responding.

Cost & Resources Needed

- Free to low cost!
- Flipgrid is an online video discussion board platform that is free for educators.
- The only potential cost is associated with this strategy is the purchase of the book. Several students have utilized their local public library.