

It's My Jam: Using Google Jamboard to Encourage Engagement and Collaboration

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Introduction/need for innovation

Although hybrid pedagogy is not a new concept (Linder, 2017), the COVID-19 pandemic and required shift to remote learning emphasized the need to leverage technology to maintain student engagement. Teaching with a hybrid approach requires the integration of technology to create effective learning environments. In these classroom settings, “face-to-face activities are often combined with technology-mediated activities so that there is more active learning in the face-to-face setting” (Linder, 2017, p. 11).

Just as in face-to-face classrooms, instructors in hybrid classrooms need to provide opportunities for students to engage with the material. In an effort to maintain student engagement in the hybrid learning environment, we integrated the use of Google Jamboard. These Jamboards allow “pedagogy of play” (Project Zero, 2016) in the college classroom during a highly stressful time (Draucker, 2020) to strengthen students’ “creativity, wellness, and improved graduate employability” (Leather et al., 2020, p. 1). Jamboards encourage several of the 21st Century Skills to be strengthened such as collaboration, technology literacy, and creativity (Stauffer, 2020).

How it works

We utilized the free Google Jamboard option, which is an online platform that allows multiple people to collaborate on a shared digital space. Participants do not have to sign up for an account in advance; they will be listed as anonymous animals (e.g., anonymous koala, anonymous hedgehog) instead of by their names. To use Jamboard, the instructor will start by setting up a board:

1. Go to <https://jamboard.google.com/>
2. Click the plus sign in the bottom right corner to start a new board.
3. Add additional slides if necessary.
4. Include text and shapes to provide structure and/or instructions to the slide(s).

Each Jamboard has multiple tools users can select such as adding a text box or sticky note and emphasizing elements with the use of a pen, marker, highlighter, or brush tool. Users can add basic shapes such as rectangles, squares, and circles. Backgrounds can also be added to the slides to help customize the design. Additionally, users can upload images to the Jamboard then resize and reposition them. This feature works best when users are logged into their Google accounts.

Just as it is easy to add elements to a Jamboard, users need to take caution in removing elements with an eraser tool or simple delete feature. There is also a “clear frame” button if the information does not need to be saved.

To disseminate the Jamboards, you can just a post link to the Jamboard in the learning management system so students can access it or drop a link to the Jamboard in a chat box if using a video conferencing tool such as Zoom or MS Teams. The creator of the Jamboard can give permission to specific people to edit the board or can create a shareable link so the Jamboard is editable to anyone who uses it. Each Jamboard can also be printed or downloaded as a PDF for dissemination.

Results to date/implications

Jamboards were utilized in two agricultural communications courses during the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters. The Jamboards were used for a variety of purposes such as brainstorming content ideas, providing advice to complete journalistic interviews, asking questions about upcoming assignments, classifying articles into news value categories, and comparing web design platforms. Students said they appreciated the opportunity to participate in class activities regardless of from where they were joining the class (home or in the classroom). They also enjoyed getting to see their classmates' input. One student said, "In order to engage both in-person and virtual students, [instructor] created activities that would allow all of us to participate. By using programs such as Google Jamboard, all students were able to collaborate, share ideas and be involved in classroom discussions."

Beyond the classroom setting, Jamboards were also used for advisory committee meetings, training programs, and to facilitate reflection during a virtual conference. The opportunity to quickly post thoughts, read what others were thinking, and move items around for organization provided more engagement than the chat function in Zoom. Additionally, the ability to actively participate in both the idea generation and the organization of themes was more easily facilitated in a virtual setting though the use of the Jamboard.

Additional ways Google Jamboards can be used include the following: assign groups of students to certain slides and have them work collaboratively; have all students work through slides at the same time; use the slides to brainstorm ideas and share resources; capture many thoughts, opinions, ideas then organize them into themes; and have students "vote" for options presented on the slide.

Future plans/advice to others

We plan to continue to use Google Jamboards in classes where students have access to their computers during class to quickly collect feedback, opinions, and ideas. It is easy to train others to use this platform and the boards can be duplicated for future use. Jamboards are a great way to collect anonymous feedback and input, but they do not allow you to easily track students for individual grades/points. (It is possible, but is not an easy process). It can also be slightly distracting when multiple people are accessing the Jamboard at the same time. The opportunities for application are numerous, but prior planning does allow for more efficient use of the Jamboards and fewer questions during facilitation.

Costs/resources needed

There is an actual physical Google Jamboard that comes with a display, 2 styluses, 1 eraser, and a wall mount for \$4,999 plus an annual payment of \$600 for technical support (Jamboard, n.d.). However, we used the free online platform. For this to work, each participant needs to have a device with Internet access. The instructor will need a Google account to create the boards. A pen mouse or stylus is also convenient for freehand writing/drawing, but not required.

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