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**Civic Engagement, Historical Dialogue, and the Development of Personal
Learning Networks Through Microblogging on EDMODO**

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Abstract

This qualitative teacher-action research study documented the observed and reported experiences of a high-school social studies teacher and his class of 20 Applied 9th Grade United States Civics and Government students.

The curriculum involved student access to EDMODO, a prearranged digital environment that enabled students to engage in microblogging activities.

EDMODO provided students with a platform to discuss historically significant topics in a connected learning environment. In particular, students' discussed course-specific readings, identified relatable current events, and expressed/defended individual opinions.

The purpose of this study was to encourage increased civic engagement and historical dialogue through the establishment of a secure personal learning network at a mid-sized suburban high school in Pennsylvania.

Methods of gathering data included surveys, observations, interviews, student work, and field notes. Data analysis methods used reflective memos, coding of observational logs and student work, and the formation of multiple interrelated theme statements.

During the study, there was an increase in content specific engagement. Many students pro-actively attempted to build a connection between content and select current events. This study concluded with the personal improvement of United States Civics and Government knowledge among select students.

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Researcher Stance

Regardless of vocation, many individuals can trace the steps they took, identify those who influenced them, and reflect on the challenges that they overcame in order to arrive at their current professional circumstance. Normally, individuals who dedicate their lives toward the education of others accomplish these goals as a result of a multitude of noteworthy factors. Many simply enjoy the diverse interactions that teaching affords. Others have an emotional connection to public service. Some had an experience with an educator who transformed their perception in the direction of learning. These proceedings are noteworthy and often forge some of the most dedicated teachers across the world. Yet, most students cannot easily describe the characteristics that encompass effective teaching. Conversely, many are well aware when they are lucky enough to truly experience a learning environment fashioned by a good teacher. Superior teachers often strive to utilize each educational opportunity, work to transform the experience had by all pupils, and encourage students to recognize the value of every educational investment. Personally, there is no single event that led me toward a career in public education, rather I amassed a collection of interconnected experiences that shaped my existence and encouraged me to become a teacher.

Unlike many healthy young individuals, the early years of my life were awash with hospital visits, stays with grandparents, and familial uncertainty. Born

a little over a year after me, my sister Lindsay was continually in and out of one of the top children's hospitals on the east coast. For the first five years of my life, I split time living with my parents and grandparents, as my mom and dad attempted to find a medical solution to my sisters congenital heart defect. As a result, many early developmental milestones were fulfilled in a nontraditional manner. After four years of fighting, Lindsay died. Following her death my family drew closer. As a result of this experience, I always felt different. Living with both my parents and grandparents allowed me to develop a special perspective about what was important, who mattered, and how to be a good person. Additionally, this nontraditional living situation fostered a distinct level of personal curiosity. At an early age I was exposed to an assortment of perspectives, opportunities, and viewpoints. My grandparents have always been huge proponents of practical learning and they attempted to expose us to various divergent experiences in an effort to demonstrate what made our community unique. It was within these experiences that I began to understand the value of developing an enhanced awareness with the world around me.

This natural curiosity has continued throughout my life. Although I did not know it at the time, a Bethlehem Area School District redistricting plan pressed my parents to enroll me in private rather than public school starting with kindergarten. During this preliminary phase of my education, I went to St. Anne's Catholic School in Bethlehem. St. Anne's was a neat place and many of my

teachers were still members of the Catholic religious community of Sisters. The presence of a significant amount of Catholic nuns at St. Anne's made for an interesting and often regimented education. However, during my six years at St. Anne's, many of the sisters retired and eventually none were left. Despite the elapsed time, I have many vivid memories from my years at St. Anne's. Above all else, I remember the building principal Sister Eileen Hubbard. Sister Eileen was a stern woman who was built for intimidation. The students viewed her office as if it was death row and she appeared to relish the reputation. Over time, Sister Eileen and I grew to appreciate one another and following several discipline issues she made a bargain with me that in exchange for quality behavior I could use the school's new computer lab during recess periods. Having developed a fascination with the personal computer that my grandfather recently bought me, I quickly complied. The experience of using this computer during recess had little to do with my actual education but encouraged me to recognize the relationship that my actions had with interactions. Educationally, St. Anne's was strictly controlled, there was little time for detailed topic interaction, and almost every task was completed using teacher led direct instruction. Personally, I remember experiencing a distinct fear of failure, yet I cannot put a finger on whom specifically instilled that fear in me. Nevertheless, it was during this phase of my education that I learned to appreciate discussing the information I had learned at school with anyone who would listen. Neither of my parents have a formal

education beyond trade school, yet they always showed a distinct interest in what I had learned and made time to talk with me about my day.

After spending six years in a private education setting at St. Anne's, my parents decided it would be best to transition to public school. Again, I did not know it at the time but they were unhappy with the education that my brother was receiving at Bethlehem Catholic High School and felt it would be easier for me to make the move at the middle school level. It was during my time at East Hills Middle School that I had a teacher who would forever transform how I viewed education and shape what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. East Hills was much different than anything I had experienced at St Anne's. East Hills offered a wealth of diverse courses and activities, there were students of all demographic backgrounds, and I often learned in a more student-centered manner. Over the course of 6th grade I adjusted more quickly than I let on and easily settled into the new routine in public school. Personally, what I remember most from middle school was the distinct academic tracking, alternative methods of education, and learning in a pleasurable and often creative manner. Educationally, I was always placed in one of the higher academic tracks. At the time I thought nothing of the fact that everyone discussed what section they were in many of us wore our placement in these groupings like a badge of honor. I was in 6-1, 7-0, and 8-0.

It was during that special time in middle school when I met my greatest educational influence, Mr. Dorman. Everyone has a favorite teacher and or an

individual who pushed him or her toward their chosen career and for me that person was Mr. Dorman. Most of my educational experiences prior to seventh grade involved direct teacher led instruction that had very little hands on or nontraditional learning opportunities built into the daily routine. Beyond this single educational example almost every additional classroom setting involved drill and practice. Although I was often fairly bored, teacher centered instruction was all that I knew. Consequently, making the transition from the fundamental instructional practices related to traditional direct instruction to Mr. Dorman's classroom put me in a state of shock.

Pedagogically, Mr. Dorman created daily lessons by implementing a wide array of student driven instruction. Looking back, it is easy for me to say that Mr. Dorman's social studies class was one of the first times that I actually looked forward to school. Every day was a new experience due to the fact that we completed assignments in a manner that encouraged excitement. We would use computers, compose skits, and truly experience the historical significance of the global cultures we were studying. Beyond the innovative instructional strategies his classroom was bright, educational materials hung everywhere, and students never felt like it was singularly his space. Essentially, Mr. Dorman made me and many of my peers take pleasure in school in a way that many of us had never before known. Accordingly, I like to think that these instructional methods encouraged many of us to succeed in his class. Many of the classroom activities

challenged us to communicate historically significant themes in a project-based approach. For starters, almost everything was accomplished amongst small learning communities. Moreover, I can honestly say that the group work experience I had in his class was the finest that I had ever been a part of. Mr. Dorman had a way to ensure that the groups were fairly balanced and that everyone held specific responsibilities. Additionally, almost all of the groups were free of previously established friendships and the responsibilities were equally shared. The creation of these groups allowed the students to work with one another in a manner that encouraged collaboration, diligence, and pushed us to interact outside of our comfort zones. The group work had us creating battle plans to study historically significant encounters, cooking meals in an effort to appreciate global cultures, and writing history themed musical scores.

Again, at the time, I was unaware of the divergent educational strategies at play, but I did know that I really enjoyed the class and the structure made me think about school in a way I had not previously experienced. Personally, this was when I started to care about achievement rather than simply anticipate that success in school would continue to come easily. Consequently, when I reflect on this occurrence I can easily say that my seventh grade social studies class was the most prolific student-centered learning experience I have ever been a part of. As an adult, he and I have had several conversations about my experience in his class. Although he always remains humble, I have discerned that many of my

peers also hold the same reverence for the experience we shared during our time in Mr. Dorman's classroom. From start to finish, his class was about empowering students with the resources that they needed to become successful. Mr. Dorman took his students and placed them in an environment where they needed to question resource materials, develop arguments, and support opinions. Looking back, he was doing something different. He was not simply following the traditional process of transferring information; he was creating a unique instructional component. To me, he was the personification of a quality teacher.

For many individuals, high school represents a unique moment when you develop into a semblance of who you will become later in life. Thankfully, the individual who I was during high school only represents a microcosm of the man I have become. However, during high school I did develop an increased curiosity toward academics and found myself increasingly comfortable studying the humanities. It wasn't until I studied more complex history and language arts classes that I gained a perspective of what reading and writing truly meant. It was during this sequence of coursework that I started to develop an admiration for what was happening around me while I worked to determine the relationship that people, events, and segments of time had with other specific proceedings. Personally, this came to life in each of my fundamental social studies classes. Through the use of source materials, current events, and additional coursework I found myself spending time outside of school becoming more acquainted with the

happenings in my local community, across the nation, and around the world. This transformation encouraged me to nurture a relationship with my dad as we spent more and more time talking about politics, current events, and the major issues of the day. Although my high school teachers did not have the same impact that Mr. Dorman previously had, I do believe that they helped shaped my perspective on the use of engaging primary and secondary sources to drive instruction.

Coming from a household where little was previously known about college, my higher education investigation was disorganized at best. However, I did know I wanted to be a teacher and based on some quality advice I ended up at Moravian. My educational experience at Moravian was decisive in my development as a teacher. Beyond the superior curriculum, Moravian instills a meticulous degree of reflective practice in undergraduate teachers that effectively creates professionals who tirelessly seek the best opportunities for the students they are tasked with educating. Although many of my peers felt the process was exhausting, I found it to be enlightening since it continually pushed me to reaffirm that I did in fact want to be a teacher while understanding what it took to be successful. Looking back, I often felt like an outsider at Moravian. For me, teaching has always been more about the educational experience not the content and many of my peers did not approach teaching the same way.

Student teaching was an experience that I always struggle to explain to educational outsiders. The anticipation, fear, and workload combine to create a

period in time that serves as an introduction to what life is actually like as a dedicated American schoolteacher. Student teaching at Moravian was the culminating event of a program of study that created educational professionals whom never forget what it is like to reflect on the processes related to instructing at a high level of proficiency. Personally, my student teaching experience took me to Northampton Middle School and Wilson Area High School. Although I didn't know it at the time, it was within these experiences that I would directly find full time employment and become the teacher that I am today. Overall, what I remember most from student teaching was how tired I was. Throughout the entire process I was exhausted and I didn't necessarily ever feel like I was able to catch up or complete enough work to be satisfied with my personal educational performance. As I reflect on student teaching, I can honestly say that it was a great situational experience of what the profession actually entails and the sacrifices one must make to become a quality educator. During the initial phases of my career I often wondered how I could make my lessons more engaging. It was during this preliminary experience that I started to appreciate empowering my students to come to their own unique historical conclusions through the manipulation of instructional technology. During student teaching, I quickly realized that the best teachers treat everyday like they are student teaching continually building on past experiences to improve and offering greater opportunities to each student.

After five years away, I returned to Freedom High School as a social studies teacher rather than a student. This transition was complicated due to the fact that much of the faculty knew me as Thomas Ruhf the student and not the colleague. Additionally, to make matters more complex, my schedule featured multiple senior level courses of which my sisters Kaitlyn and Laura were members. My first year at Freedom was a complete blur. Accordingly, much of my professional experience at Freedom was characterized by the district's financial mismanagement, a global economic crisis, and the related processes of being laid off and rehired multiple times. During my tenure at Freedom I taught social studies and biology courses, helped with drama productions, and coached football. The varied routine and turbulent financial environment in the Bethlehem Area School District pushed me to work harder, to never take anything for granted, and to continue honing my pedagogy year in and out. However, it was at Freedom that I was able to truly incorporate instructional technology into my daily classroom routines. While teaching at Freedom I was able to mentor under fabulous instructors who taught me that to become a better teacher you need to gain a greater understanding of the practices of those working around you. Prior to my first teaching job, I thought I had it all figured out. However, I quickly learned that I was misguided. Teaching, like many other professions is one where you can learn a great deal by simply asking peers what they are doing, why they are doing it, and investigating about how you could use similar processes in your

own classroom. From these experiences I learned how to better blend traditional practices with progressive strategies while always attempting to discover what approaches could make me better. Many of my colleagues at Freedom were utilizing Pennsylvania's now defunct Classrooms of the Future grant monies to incorporate the use of one-to-one laptop technology, effectively revolutionizing the interconnectivity that students experienced. These teachers researched, implemented, and explored the use of Web 2.0 Tools like wikis, microblogging, and early forms of education specific social media in an effort to empower how the students approached the study of history in a more student centered, inquiry specific manner. After a couple of years of extermination, the financial situation of the Bethlehem Area School District took a pronounced turn for the worst and I found myself without a job.

Rather than feel sorry for myself, I spent the summer of 2011 applying for every single open social studies position in the state of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. During that time I was blessed to have multiple interviews and actually felt like I was making headway. However, as summer was coming to a close I had yet to secure full time employment. As mid-August approached, I began to worry. During the second week of August I was invited to complete two-second interviews, one in the Wilson Area School District and one in the Tredyffrin Easttown School District. During each of these interviews I made the implementation of educational technologies a centerpiece of my personal

employment pitch. Subsequently, I was offered a job in the Wilson Area School District and an additional opportunity to teach a lesson in Tredyffrin Easttown. Having already committed to coaching football in the fall at Freedom, I accepted the position at the Wilson Area High School due to its proximity to my home.

During my time at Wilson I came to appreciate the existence of a respectful student body, the atmosphere of a small public high school, and a sense of security that I never previously felt. For me, the transition from Bethlehem Area School District to the Wilson Area School District was not easy. Bethlehem was a technology Mecca where educational professionals can utilize almost any form of modern instructional technology in an effort to supplement instruction. The Wilson Area School District on the other hand has lagged behind with respect to available forms of instructional technology. The lack of technological resources forced me to alter the methods that I used in my classroom. However, despite these shortcomings, I effectively sought every opportunity possible to hit reset and continually worked to ensure technology integration in alternative ways. Professionally, I felt supported by the administration, but I wanted to bring my students into the 21st century and provide them with a learning environment that would suit their future career needs. Through the use of student-centered microblogging, I have experienced some success supporting my students as they become engaged in the content beyond the characteristic trends. However,

transforming my normal procedures through the implementation of classroom technology seemed unlikely due to limited district computer implementation.

Consequently, my philosophical desire to teach using superior educational technology led me to actively search for an alternative teaching position at a school that enthusiastically made the realization and maintenance of instructional technology a district priority. Fortunately, I was able to secure employment in Southern Lehigh School District in Center Valley, Pennsylvania. Southern Lehigh is a nationally recognized Project Red Signature School District that continues to produce a high tech learning environment where each student receives an Apple MacBook Pro as an individual instructional tool. The opportunities for technology integration at Southern Lehigh are limited only by the aspiration of the individual instructors. The immeasurable scope of educational technology at Southern Lehigh made me giddy. Effectively, teachers are able to develop classroom exercises that feature Web 2.0 tools while encouraging students to approach individual education through inquiry, discovery, and the creation of personalized connections using methods that more closely align with processes they will complete following their formal education. These opportunities lead to connected learning experiences that engage the students through individual management of technology.

Moving forward, I have come to believe that quality teaching is best articulated through one's efforts to continually develop professional skills in spite

of individual comfort levels. Teaching is increasingly becoming a connected profession where professional development opportunities, classroom activities, and student/teacher interactions are readily occurring in cyberspace. Today, teachers must utilize technologically rich instructional strategies in an effort to ensure that the students are able to analyze, inquire, and discover information that is otherwise continually changing. Furthermore, educational professionals must continually develop comprehensive integration methods to incorporate technology throughout the scope and sequence of current content areas. The factors that inhibit streamlined incorporation of educational technology are vast but they cannot be viewed as a deterrent. Personally, I believe that it is my responsibility to develop instructional strategies that integrate modern technologies as a means of generating contemporary learning environments where my students are able to discover information through an improved understanding of contemporary instructional themes. This transformation will empower the students to think independently about historical themes, understand why certain events transpired, and realize solutions to the complex challenges we face as a nation.

To achieve these goals, I incorporated the use of microblogging as a means of promoting the importance of course specific inquiry, discourse, and reflection. The EDMODO microblogging platform was used in an organic manner that encouraged my students to realize the significance of individual perspectives as they endeavored to gain a more complete understanding of the explicit

responsibilities held by American citizens. Through the development of connected instructional strategies that promoted “global awareness, financial literacy, health awareness, information technology skills, critical thinking, creativity, and a strong work ethic” my students were able to identify historical themes that matter, analyze the role that these themes held in the development of the nation, and become more active participants in the activities happening around them as they transition into adulthood. (Clark, p. 66) Essentially, my students utilized various forms of educational technology as a means of engaging in vibrant discussion, confer about comprehensive historically significant tribulations, and to develop a sense of value within our study of our national civics and government arrangement. To this point, I have strived to embrace the transformation of technology and I hope to continue as a teacher of history through technology.

Literature Review

Introduction

According to statistics from the 2012 Current Population Survey (CPS), a monthly examination of 50,000 American households conducted by the United States Census Bureau, roughly 78.9% of households possess a standalone computing device (Computer and Internet Trends in America, 2014). Collecting data on computers and Internet use have been a part of the CPS since 1984 when it initially reported that only 8.2% of American households owned a personal computer. (Computer and Internet Trends in America, 2014) Like it or not, digital media continue to permeate our daily existence and transform the relationships that represent typical day-to-day human interaction. Modern electronic media offer users a unique opportunity to progress toward a more advanced understanding of events occurring in the world around us. Eric Langhorst (2007) has embraced the modern technological movement stating, “our world is increasingly about having media – music, video games, phone calls, or streaming video at our convenience anywhere and anytime” (p. 74). Connectivity has altered the emblematic human experience; we have increasingly grown accustomed to instant access to previously inaccessible knowledge, a continual connectivity to loved ones, and a feeling of intense confidence as a result of our innovative networked lifestyle. This progress has not developed without obstacles. Donna Celano and Susan Neuman (2010) express apprehension that the overwhelming

digitization of our culture has manifested in spite of an enhanced digital divide, generating yet another national shortcoming between the “haves” and the “have nots.” Individual digital exposure and practice is often dissimilar depending on a variety of factors, including who you are, where you live, and how much money you have. Regardless, digital media is transforming many conventional human experiences including American public education.

From the printing press to the Internet, the incorporation of technology in education is evolving. Long ago, Horace Mann understood the interwoven relationship that existed between individual freedom, human nature, and the need for an enhanced national education system. In his second annual report from 1838 Mann stated, “until a desire to learn exists within the child, some foreign force must constantly be supplied to keep him agoing; but from the moment that a desire is excited, he is self-motived, and goes alone” (Mann, 1838/1957, p. 39). The challenge of enticing students to learn remains, and teachers across the nation often struggle to identify strategies that promote student motivation. Today, teachers are increasingly encountering classes filled with indifferent student populations (Damon, 2012). Indifference is best described as a human sentiment epitomized by a distinct a lack of interest, concern, or sympathy. Teachers across the nation are turning to diverse practices focusing on the use of digital media to transform classrooms toward the origination of responsibilities or skills necessary for success following primary school (Damon, 2012).

The founding fathers constructed the United States using their unique interpretation of numerous historically significant democratic principles. A continued understanding of these political limitations is an essential component of our national discourse. Customarily, autonomous societies need to replicate in a fashion that reinforces the characteristic principles that allowed for the creation of a prosperous civilization. For the United States to endure, the citizenry must appropriately enlighten each subsequent generation with regard to certain guiding principles so they can continue to carry out explicit democratic duties. The preservation of these principles ensures that the national cultural, political, and societal traditions remain intact. James Gee is a trendsetting professor of literacy at Arizona State University. In his text, *The Anti-Education*, Gee (2013) argues that the adoption of digital media tools have had the ability to make our educational institutions and society fundamentally more intelligent. However, he contends that teachers must recognize that the use of technological resources can be utilized to produce and receive individualized education in a manner that is altogether dissimilar from the outcomes previously achieved through traditional instruction. As a result, stakeholders like the modern social studies teacher can incorporate digital media as a means of addressing the national civics crisis by blending established and contemporary instructional strategies to generate innovative connected learning opportunities that empower students to learn through the manipulation of digital media. The contemporary teacher must use

technology as a means of redefining instructional activities not singularly as a supplement or replacement of traditional academic activities or pursuits.

New Educational Networks

Networking has long been viewed as a practice reserved for businesspeople that are enthusiastically cultivating a professional arrangement for the purpose of generating improved production outcomes. However, contemporary technological innovations have transformed the approach that school aged children use when communicating, effectively encouraging the development of enhanced social, professional, and educational networks. These alterations have allowed students to transition toward the creation of learning systems where they “navigate and evaluate an expanding network of information” (Trust, 2012, p. 133). Today, through the use of rich technological educational arrangements like microblogging, students are able to think critically, inquire, and collaborate in ways previously unobtainable. As a result, the modern student can successfully participate in comprehensive academic interactions through the advancement of educational networking that effectively transforms traditional individual education into a “worldwide learning experience” (Barnes, 2012, p.10). Barnes (2012) argues that the development of the social networking opportunities in an academic setting allows students to become successful in the current course of study while promoting skills and connections that will benefit them far beyond the conclusion of customary schooling.

21st Century Skills

The student of tomorrow will require a set of skills that are altogether different from those essential to previous generations. Langhorst (2007) argues that 21st century skills represent abilities that contemporary students will need in order to appropriately participate in our modern civilization and workforce. Typically, 21st century skills are best defined as competencies like collaboration, digital literacy, critical thinking, and problem solving that students must master in an effort to precisely function following primary schooling. To meet this challenge, Langhorst (2007) advocates for the development of greater flexible learning opportunities as a means to stretch traditional learning beyond the conventional time restraints that most schools operate within. To support this transformation Langhorst states, “teachers can use the same tools that make online courses successful to expand learning opportunities in the classroom” (Langhorst, 2007, p. 74). Today, students do not singularly need to rely on teachers for information; rather they can actively seek guidance on the variety of skills that have become more important as they connect the content alongside available technology in a consequential manner. He argues that although traditional school specific distinctions like the physical environments and teachers should remain intact, the foundation of core learning tasks that modern educational professionals are often using may be cheating students if they “continue to think of school as a class period that begins and ends with a bell” (Langhorst, 2007, p. 77).

Consequently, it is becoming increasingly important that teachers produce technology rich instructional opportunities that extend beyond the traditional class period allowing students to become investigative or extreme learners.

The subsequent curricular transformations taking place as a result of various developments related to 21st century skills have not advanced without generating some unique challenges. Naomi Baron documented how the adoption of 21st century skills has transformed how we commonly view traditional language due to the influence of computers and mobile phones. Baron (2009) contends that digitally connected middle and high school students have developed a keen awareness as to the forms of language that are contextually appropriate in divergent settings. Furthermore, she asserts that new forms of media like computers and mobile phones have encouraged enhanced creativity that can improve student writing. Despite her initial defense, Baron (2009) explains that the real linguistic deviations from the adoption of 21st century skills involve language rules and consistency. As a result, she insists that individual academic programs and teachers need to recognize that written language practices are cyclical and subsequently establish standards to focus on when engaging in student centered writing tasks.

Beyond language, additional difficulties arise as a result of the expansion of 21st century skills. Depending on the student population, certain pupils immediately find themselves at a 21st century skills deficit. Celano and Neuman

(2010) address the existence of a national digital divide that affects the adoption of 21st century skills in low-income neighborhoods across the United States. The researchers outline how unequal access to instructional technology is manifesting as a certain shortcomings in individual connected educational opportunities. Essentially, students who have computers are afforded greater instructive prospects than those who do not. To circumvent this divide, Celano and Neuman (2010) argue that schools need to offer greater technology access to low-income children in an effort to ensure that these students will be able to efficiently develop the skills required as they learn how to manipulate available technology. Finally, they argue that once we recognize the existence of this problem, teachers must work to generate more complex learner-centered assignments focused on the expansion of 21st century skills in an effort to push students to think critically and inquire while using technology in a customized blended learning environment.

As 21st century skills become the norm, teachers must strive to understand the role that Web 2.0 plays across the entire profession. Elizabeth Wilson, Vivian Wright, Christopher Inman, and Lisa Matherson argue that Web 2.0 empowers users to exploit a wide array of interactive and collaborative tools that facilitate the production of real-time content, alter Internet environments, and provide for the allocation of information across the expanse of the Internet. The authors analyzed the position that Web 2.0 Tools play in the transformation of the traditional classroom into a modern learning environment. In this study, the

authors state “today’s student is more likely to communicate via text messaging or through social networks such as Facebook than by face to face communication” (Wilson, Wright, Inman, & Matherson, 2011, p. 65). Consequently, the authors explain that educational professionals must integrate Web 2.0 tools in an effort to exploit the changing aptitude of the national student population. Through the adoption of Web 2.0, students are more likely to complete writing assignments using microblogging, reflect on individual learning across a social media platform, or navigate primary source materials using a digital database. Essentially, Wilson, Wright, Inman, and Matherson (2011) explain that the transition toward a more technology specific environment will continue to present educational professionals with innovative and engaging ways to empower students to develop an enhanced personal connection and understanding when working alongside traditional content important in the study of history. To further these transformations, teachers must encourage students to use resources present within Google for Education Applications, EDMODO, and or Twitter as an approach for developing a collaborative progression of knowledge or as a means of facilitating individual inquiry. Regardless, teachers must be willing to educate themselves on these changes in an effort to properly model and incorporate them into the modern classroom setting.

Microblogging

Many high school students encounter difficulties when completing various forms of formal and informal course specific writing. Typically, the causes for these troubles vary depending on the individual student. Today, teachers can employ a multitude of digitally connected instructional strategies to resolve some of these complications while engaging students in school based writing like microblogging. Essentially, Microblogging is a form of blogging where users exchange fundamental components of related subject matter like writing, images, or links as a means of communicating a specific point. William Tyson (2010) explains that student generated blogs are a form of writing that showcases the diversity of modern digital media in a manner that is more representative of an individual conversation than a passage in a textbook. Furthermore, Tyson (2010) argues that microblogging allows each student to develop their own voice through the incorporation of various free forms of web-based publishing. Effectively, using microblogging services like EDMODO or Twitter allow teachers to generate an academic setting where students are able to inquire, react, and debate course specific queries using student generated research through the completion of formal and informal writing that all students can master (Tyson, 2010, p. 162).

Writing is commonly viewed as an indispensable academic skill, yet many teachers often dismiss nontraditional writing activities as less significant in favor more formal or ritualized models. As access to technology intensifies, Kathy

Mills and Vinesh Chandra (2011) argue that writing is transforming alongside the high-tech revolution. Mills and Chandra explain that “microblogging allows users to share information in very brief texts to friends or followers using multiple sources and tools, including websites, third party applications, or mobile devices” (Mills & Chandra, 2011, p. 36). Using this format, participants are able to continually provide content specific updates that allow for a heightened level of comprehensive communication extending beyond the conventional learning period. In their study, Mills and Chandra (2011) questioned the potential of microblogging as a literacy-learning instrument. More specifically, Mills and Chandra (2011) attempted to evaluate if EDMODO could be incorporated into the classroom, how students learn using this technique, and if the use of microblogging supported traditional educational needs. The validity of this question is increasingly important as more educational professionals turn to digital microblogging tools like EDMODO to augment customary writing activities while simultaneously placing greater instructional emphasis on the use of digital media.

Mills and Chandra (2011) integrated microblogging into the coursework of 166 male and female participants in the Information and Communication Technologies curriculum at an Australian University. The ages of participants ranged from 19 to 21 years, with an additional unspecified collection of older contributors who experienced delayed college admission. All participants had

minimal prior familiarity using education specific forms of social media including EDMODO. Additionally, Mills and Chandra (2011) explained that this example was the first instance at this university where EDMODO was directly integrated into this classroom environment for the sake of a study. All students were required to participate within the associated research, but only those who provided written consent were included in the findings.

The research had two distinct goals, namely increasing individual proficiency related to the use of microblogging while investigating the role that this instructional strategy could play with respect to enhanced literacy engagement. To achieve these aims, the researchers created an activity utilizing a straightforward writing task. They developed an assignment that manifested in the creation of a collaborative narrative where the study coordinator completed the first and last sentences using selections from traditional fairytales. The students worked for several weeks and were not permitted to contribute more than 140 character story segments. During this activity, the students were expected to role-play as primary aged individuals. When the writing activity was complete, Mills and Chandra (2011) had the participants reflect on the potential academic settings that EDMODO could be used in, how it could be integrated, what students would learn from its use, why they would use it, and which key learning theories could be addressed.

Broadly, the researchers found that microblogging transformed aspects of writing by “blurring the distinction between authors and readers” (Mills & Chandra, 2011, p. 38). The study relied on the collection of 330 digital artifacts that were subsequently coded to identify key themes. Additionally, Mills and Chandra (2011) explain that the incorporation of microblogging allowed educational professionals to create supportive learning communities that promoted self-initiated literacy practices. These transformative literacy events encouraged the students to develop into more accountable and reflective learners and contended that using microblogging allowed educational professionals to establish a unique social dynamic that promoted the creation of an active learning dialogue. This transformation allowed the students to engage in collaborative forms of communication through the use of network supported digital media that encouraged learning in ways previously unavailable without enhanced technology. Teachers can trust that both formal and informal student generated writing using EDMODO will lead to educational outcomes that rival those traditionally achieved through more established instructional means.

In their study, Elizabeth Stevens and Rachel Brown (2011) analyzed if blogging could be used to promote increased school specific technology integration while encouraging an enhanced thematic understanding of traditional literacy themes. From this research, Stevens and Brown (2011) found that learning with technology has developed into an essential educational element.

Furthermore, the authors explain that teaching using technology provides an instructional experience different than one that occurs in an environment devoid of modern resources. Students who are expected to complete tasks in a digital setting need instruction to support that course of action. Stevens and Brown (2011) state that the study found that many teachers consider blogs to be a divergent classroom engagement tool that empowered them to transfer information while simultaneously serving as a space to share content specific material with a diverse audience of individuals. Additionally, study participants “recognized the rich potential of blogging to provide an interactive space for authentic exchanges among students” (Stevens & Brown, 2011, p. 39).

Fundamentally, Stevens and Brown (2011) clarify that educational microblogging provides users with a distinct educational opportunity apart from the traditional classroom setting where all stakeholders can communicate in a safe, secure, and educationally exclusive manner. However, they explain that the prospects related to the use of microblogging can quickly be squandered if they are not properly planned, implemented, and rigorously tended to. To prevent this, Stevens and Brown (2011) explain that educational professionals must provide enhanced choice while continually encouraging participants to provide deeper reflection. William Kist (2010) maintains that teachers must also participate within the student microblogging universe, offering reinforcement, encouragement, and providing guidance when appropriate.

The purpose of an enhanced development of 21st century skills is difficult to debate. Torrey Trust (2012) explains that teachers must model the practices related to quality information analysis and knowledge acquisition by participating in professional learning communities. In this overview, the author highlights the instructional features and characteristics of EDMODO. Trust (2012) describes EDMODO as a school specific social networking site that allows its 6.5 million users the ability to stay connected to educationally significant course resources around the clock. Trust describes EDMODO as a “safe space for asking questions, sharing resources, and learning from other members” (Trust, 2012, p. 137). Essentially, for educational professionals to master the changes in the academic setting, they must participate in the expansion of Web 2.0 skills if they hope to translate those skills into meaningful student learning opportunities. Based on these descriptions, it is obvious that EDMODO provides teachers, students, and any additional interested stakeholders with a digital platform for a rich exchange of knowledge and skills. To successfully use digital media like EDMODO, teachers must develop a system of use that fits individual needs while focusing on the cultivation of a learning environment that supports interconnected inquiry and critical thinking.

Advanced Classroom Discussion

As teachers increase opportunities to participate in rich online discussions, they need to recognize the role of discourse within our national culture. Often,

citizens of a democracy must toil to resolve intricate and controversial issues. One common conflict resolution technique originates from the implementation of inclusive discussion practices that sanction groups of individuals to properly vet a wide array of concerns in a civil, fair, and impartial manner. Diana Hess (2011) argues that being able to civilly participate in vibrant discussions has become a key component of a balanced education. Furthermore, she contends that democracies must continually advance inclusive discourse communications in an effort to resolve concerns related to controversial issues that often pit conflicting groups openly at odds with one another. She states, “discussing controversies about the nature of the public good and how to achieve it is essential if we are going to educate for democracy” (p. 69). The value of a progressive educational discussion is difficult to debate, but the forum for the completion of such activities is continually evolving. John Dewey stated, “the belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative” (Dewey, 1938, p. 25). Consequently, educational professionals are increasingly attempting to fashion academic discussions in secure online environments that guarantee a more informative experience. Wang and Hsua (2008) support this shift and articulate how the Internet has developed into an important communication instrument since it supports both asynchronous and synchronous communication through the engagement of common educationally specific discussion practices. As a result, the modern classroom

teacher is in a unique position to enlighten students that all viewpoints fundamentally matter in this connected environment. Accordingly, the contemporary teacher must labor to develop instructional strategies that educate students how to participate in discussions containing divergent perspectives. Kist (2010) explains that teachers must use many of the same instructional strategies that worked in non-digital settings like rubrics, literature circles, and projects as a means of promoting quality instructional outcomes. As individuals attempt to safeguard the foundation of our national democratic principles, the ability to appropriately participate in deliberations is paramount. Hess describes a modern educational environment where students are taught how to “deliberate controversy by creating a climate of respect, holding students accountable for norms of civil discourse, and teaching the skills at the root of civil exchanges” (Hess, 2011, p. 73). Principally, educational professionals must recognize the responsibility and purpose of comprehensive discussion as an essential component in guarding our national political system. By fashioning a classroom structure focusing on the advancement of meaningful discussion skills, teachers are preparing students to become active participants in diverse local, regional, and national political endeavors.

For many students, being able to participate in comprehensive educational discussions is not instinctive. Therefore, teachers must develop instruction around the use of varying discussion strategies in an effort to embolden comprehensive

participation in challenging discourse. Carmen Newstreet (2008) contends that the modern student needs to feel empowered when connecting with primary source documents in a manner that encourages a meaningful reaction based on intrinsic influences if educational professionals expect debates concerning related themes. Effectively, teachers must present students with opportunities to manipulate information in a consequential manner that showcases discourse methods that aid in individual participation in rich discussions. Through her use of Socratic discussion techniques, Newstreet (2008) found that her students were capable of making meaningful connections between precise historical proceedings and modern happenings. Furthermore, by using Socratic discussions, the students controlled the inquiry through the creation and employment of diverse discussion questions that they controlled. The students talked about what mattered and were able to come to unique conclusions. These questions were selected from a related catalog and were employed in a manner that stimulated group discourse in a topical manner. To achieve these goals she focused on the employment of traditional instructional devices like poetry analysis, textual knowledge, and current events. This admission demonstrates that the use of comprehensive discussion tactics can enable students to think critically through individual participation within various course specific discussion formats, effectively ensuring deeper diverse forms of individual learning. Students need to be exposed to a variety of different forms of discussion in order to properly feel comfortable

as a participatory member of society. Gee (2013) argues that teachers can utilize a wealth of digital tools like social media, collaborative writing sites (i.e. Wikipedia), simulations, virtual worlds, and or video games as a means to facilitate blended instruction that better meets the needs of real student interests. By arguing “digital media now allow us to store, search, access, and represent this content in many different ways” teachers are free to focus on skills like developing enhanced discourse using EDMODO since comprehensive technological advances ensure that anyone can access traditionally important information at any time (Gee, 2013, p. 205).

Despite the collective understanding that classroom discussions benefit student populations, the contemporary teacher must recognize that all formats are not equal. Today, educational professionals are increasingly transitioning toward classroom discussions being held over the Internet. Many are troubled by this transition due to the existence of various lingering questions concerning the overall validity of an increasingly digitized society (Carr, 2008). Conventionally, teachers often inquire if online discourse can support traditional levels of participation or potentially yield amplified engagement. Since many modern deliberations are gradually being held in unique digital formats, teachers must comprehend the role that these new environments offer participants. VanDoorn and Eklund (2013) contend that discourse occurring on social networks has the potential to aid in the development of vibrant peer-to-peer self-motivated

learning. They found that completing discussions in an online setting effectively extend individual student learning. As a result, students were able to participate within various content specific actions while simultaneously creating an open-source environment empowering the students to alter the direction of future discussions. This is an attitude also echoed by Serena Yu. In her study, Yu (2009) argued that student participation in online discussions had a significant impact on individual involvement in subsequent face-to-face dialogue and in individual academic achievement. To support this study, Yu said “My ultimate aim was that, through technology, my students would gain the comfort level and intellectual confidence to more fully participate in F2F interaction with their peers and experience greater academic success” (Yu, 2009, p. 10). Overall, the students participating in online learning actions were able to gain confidence while building individual knowledge. Fundamentally, modern online discussions are being used in a flexible learning environment to encourage the development of a deeper understanding of varied learning connections. Shiang-Kwei Wang and Hui-Yin Hsua (2008) discovered similar findings in a study that articulated that digital discussions using online tools like blogs often intensify the individual participatory educational experiences. The researchers found that through the manipulation of technology users were able to experience periods of deep reflection where they are able to better communicate thoughts during subsequent online discussion postings. Additionally, participants stated that partaking in

online discussions allowed them to learn additional relevant information from the related compulsory reading of peer postings. Digital discourse interactions promote a dynamic exchange of knowledge with respect to the current content specific online discussion assignments yielding enhanced student contributions.

However, like almost anything else, not all student participants within these various studies reported quality experiences. Some individuals expressed a level of criticism due to the existence of a lack of complete student participation within the blogging assignments. Additionally, students reported deficiencies within student on-task behavior leading to various postings that did not benefit the overall acquisition of on-topic related knowledge. These issues are consistent with the fact that instructors must provide detailed structure to online discussion activities in an effort to focus students around specific tasks and goals. Overall, Yu stated, “online discussion gives all students a voice” (Yu, 2009, p. 18). Fundamentally, the research confirms that those who are already avid participants will continue to participate, those who need confidence will gain affirmation, and those who are more introverted will finally have a stable venue to have their voice heard. Barnes (2012) maintains that students do not easily understand the difference between personal and educational use of social media and therefore teachers need to establish clear objectives and expectations when incorporating digital media into the classroom. Through the establishment of classroom specific norms, like limiting the length of responses, sharing of source materials, avoiding

profanity / personal attacks, the use of proper English, and allowing for the use of emoticons to illustrate emotions she explains that students are more likely to understand the purpose of the social media environment as educational and not social (Barnes, 2012, p. 111). Teachers need to establish these learning opportunities in a manner that clearly defines student roles while allowing for enough academic freedom that supports individual educational growth.

Civic Engagement

Many social studies classroom are struggling to assume a role within the technological transformations taking place across the American education system. In a democratic republic like the United States, citizens enjoy free will to become as politically, socially, or culturally active as they deem fit. In the definitive text *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville acutely stated “nothing is more fertile in prodigies than the art of being free; but there is nothing more arduous than the apprenticeship of liberty” (Tocqueville, 1835/1898, p. 314). The American republic requires a complex level of participation from its citizenry. Without involvement, the nation is often relegated to an existence wrought with conflict, division, and a fear of heightened despotism. Civic attitudes often begin in the home, but are typically cultivated in social studies classroom.

As a member of a research team at Stanford University, William Damon (2012) argues that the American public school system must transform in an effort to classify civic education as a national priority. He believes this alteration will

require comprehensive curricular enhancement in an effort to refocus national attention toward the importance of civics as a means of preserving our national liberty. During his tenure, Damon has witnessed “frequent expressions of apathy, lack of interest, and outright ignorance of past and present civic matters among American high school and college students” (Damon, 2012, p. 23). These findings are representative of what he classifies as an increasing torrent of apathy toward the development of civics knowledge, motivation, and interest across the American primary, secondary, and collegiate school systems.

Educational professionals must meet this challenge head on. Damon (2012) believes that the modern public school teacher can start by using digital media to transform curriculums in an effort to inspire school aged students through the incorporation of relatable civic leaders, developing an understanding of national history beyond chronology, advancing a pride in America’s preeminent national traditions, and focusing on a more concentrated understanding of particular roles that American citizens historically have come to relish. Essentially, all of these goals can be accomplished through the integration of enhanced forms of digital media like social networking. Fundamentally, American teachers need to “create opportunities for young people to participate in civic and political events within and beyond the school” (Damon, 2012, p. 26). By combining traditional and non-traditional civic arrangements shaped by digital media directly into the curriculum, teachers are able to showcase transformative

political roles that occur during all stages of life. By prompting students to think civically, teachers can promote participation at earlier ages and help to create students who are more likely to appreciate the responsibilities that originate alongside American citizenship and act rather than react.

Understanding the root cause of the current American civic education emergency is convoluted. Modern teachers must recognize that there is no single solution to resolve this crisis. Our national educational landscape features a multitude of converging problematic dynamics that can only be solved by commissioning diverse multilayered tactics. *In Democracy for Some: The Civic Opportunity Gap in High School*, Joseph Kahne and Ellen Middaugh (2008) researched the role that race and ethnicity played in determining high school curricular civic opportunities while paralleling the experience that students had completing a programs of study within an Advanced Placement versus a traditional college prep government course. The findings of this research represent an introductory understanding of the national availability of quality civic learning opportunities. Principally, the researchers completed this study in an effort to measure the role that student civic education played in the development of a well-rounded American citizen. The study was comprised of a nationally representative sample of more than four thousand high school aged students from grades 9 and 12. Once complete, the research found that “students who are more academically successful, or white and those with parents of higher

socioeconomic status receive more classroom-based civic learning opportunities” (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008, p. 5). Based on the finding, the researchers developed numerous definite policy recommendations. First, they argued in favor of providing more meaningful professional development and curricular support to civics instructors. As a result, teachers in traditionally underserved school districts would hopefully enhance instruction to feature more vibrant instructional strategies within the study of civics. Next the researchers sought the development of new initiatives focused on bringing civic opportunities to low socioeconomic populations. Through the development of universal best practices in civics education, teachers might be able to increase an interest in the study of civics where one previously does not already exist. Finally, Kahne and Middaugh (2008) encouraged the development of protocol that inform and direct future public policy and practice surrounding the delivery of civic education. Essentially, this study verifies what many already knew, civic education varies greatly depending on a multitude of factors, most of which are out of the control of those who are most significantly being affected. Socioeconomics play a substantial role in the delivery of educational outcomes for many, but there are methods that teachers can take in an effort to meet these challenges while providing access to quality instruction through the use of educational technology. Teachers need to get digital media in the hands of students in an effort to provide a balanced civic education.

Unfortunately, we cannot simply will the removal of the current civic education gap without implementing dynamic systemic alterations. Michele Herczog outlines what she identified as the root causes of civic engagement deficiencies including “race/ethnicity, academic track, and socio-economic status” (Herczog, 2012, p. 20). The author cites divergent national civics statistics in an effort to provide mathematic support to her thesis. Her solutions are comprehensive and somewhat controversial. She explains that American schools need to restore traditional civic-minded instructional foci, transform civic education into a multi-modal focus where many content areas engage in instruction, and verify that content and curriculum materials are useful and worthy of analysis. Essentially, according to her beliefs, educational professionals need to develop civic learning opportunities that meet the needs of a more modern student body. Teachers need to bring civics into the 21st century. Through the incorporation of technology, diverse cultural heritages, and the introduction of multiple perspectives, educational professionals can push students toward a historical understanding that far exceeds those provided to previous generations. Herczog (2012) explains that these alterations should be viewed as a means of providing a proper student centered civic education to current and future generations of students. These adjustments will offer the school aged population the necessary knowledge that they need to become civic-minded participants following the completion of primary schooling. Herczog stated “the civic

achievement gap reveals the ugly truth that we are not promoting democracy for all, but democracy for some” (Herczog, 2012, p. 26).

Herczog (2012) argues that teachers can remedy these civic shortcomings by providing instruction in government, history, economics, law, and democracy. By using instructional strategies present within resources like EDMODO, teachers can empower students to discuss current local, national, and international issues that they deem important. Furthermore, she contends that schools can provide opportunities for students to organize and perform service learning projects outside of the traditional classroom environment that permit them to connect the issues being studied to those occurring in the local community. Subsequently, the incorporation of diverse digital media will empower the students to reflect on these experiences, deliberate realistic solutions, and connect the content being studied to the community in ways that previously was not possible (Kist, 2010, p. 56).

Summary

In *Democracy in Education*, John Dewey famously stated, “society is one word, but many things” (Dewey, 1916, p.94). The diverse makeup of modern America demands more from our national education system. Digital media is not concerned with the race, sex, or religious beliefs of individuals manipulating it for the purpose of knowledge accumulation and or skill development. Thomas (2011) argues that our society can use advances in digital technology to ensure that we

become more wise and just. He contends that the resources present within various forms of digital technology allow us to access cognition outside our own natural abilities while enhancing our learning in a meaningful and often enlightening ways (Thomas, 2011, p. 18). As a result, teachers are tasked with developing instructional strategies that utilize modern technologies as a means of creating contemporary educational environments where “participants learn through mutual engagement around common goals and technological resources” (Stevens & Brown, 2011, p. 34). The incorporation of Web 2.0 tools like microblogging allows teachers to promote the importance of instructional skills like civic discussion in a flexible networked setting that encourages students to comprehend the implication of individual responsibilities held by American citizens. By developing instructional strategies that promote “global awareness, financial literacy, health awareness, information technology skills, critical thinking, creativity, and a strong work ethic,” students are likely to feel empowered with respect to the roles that they must assume as they transition toward adulthood (Clark, 2009, p. 66). Teachers must enable students to utilize educational technology as a means to promote discussion, solve comprehensive problems, and to develop a sense of value within the entire established system effectively allowing the students to understand the role that they hold within the entire system.

The American political system relies on enhanced understanding and participation from the majority of its citizens. Increasingly, the modern American student is gradually becoming more disconnected from the characteristic rights and responsibilities that manifest alongside contemporary citizenship roles (Damon, 2012). Concurrently, the American educational landscape is placing greater emphasis on transformative instructional theories, standardized tests, and inclusive national curriculums that directly relate to uniform testing concentrations. Damon (2012) clarifies that civic education, historical intelligence, and the development of an educated electorate have been relegated to a diminished role of institutional importance across the American education system. Reliance on traditional instructional approaches often viewed as necessary for translating the significance of American citizenship have uncovered an increasing level of civic-minded apathy. This indifference demonstrates an erosion of significant American values and ideologies that can be restored through educationally specific digital media.

Horace Mann famously stated, “For every lock that is made, a false key is made to pick it” (Mann, 1848/1957, p.99). Without a dramatic incorporation of useful forms of digital media within the American civic education system the nation is quickly approaching a period where the usefulness of commonly assumed American citizenship responsibilities might be relegated to a chapter in future history texts.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

I conducted a 12-week action research study on the use of microblogging as a means of promoting improved content interaction and civic engagement in an Applied 9th Grade United States Civics and Government course. During this time, the students created individual microblogging profiles using the free and secure online resource EDMODO. The students generated individual microblogging posts in an effort to enhance contextual knowledge, literacy engagement, and as a method of promoting improved student commitment related to the historical study in United States Civics and Government. EDMODO is an online instructional resource specifically designed to engage student, teachers, and additional stakeholders in the establishment of a dynamic personal learning network.

Setting

This study was conducted at a suburban high school in eastern Pennsylvania. The school district has three elementary schools, one intermediate school, one middle school, and one high school. The six school buildings are geographically dispersed around the school district. The high school, which opened in 1955, has undergone various facilities upgrades and is in a modern condition. The majority of the recent facilities upgrades have been completed in an effort to ensure that the building can better accommodate modern teaching practices. The school district provides each teacher with an Apple MacBook Pro

computer allowing him or her to interact and manipulate classroom technology. Additionally, each student in the high school is provided with an Apple MacBook Pro computer that they may elect to take home and use for both personal and professional activities. Supplementary technology available for use includes document cameras, LCD projectors, enhanced technology classrooms, and the assistive services of a fulltime building technology coach and educator.

At the time of the study, the district student population was approximately 3,121 students. The high school population was approximately 1,051 students in grades nine through twelve. The school featured a variety of students from different ethnic groups including; Caucasian (88%), Asian (4%), Hispanic (4%), African American (2%), and Multi-Racial (1%). The high school operated on a five period per day school schedule on a rotating six-day cycle. Each class was 77 minutes long with a 42-minute enrichment period in the middle of the school day. The school day started at 7:40 AM and ended at 2:25 PM. Students completed 26.0 course credits in order to fulfill the graduation requirements set by the local board of education. During this study, I taught in a co-teaching environment alongside a special education teacher who is also certified in social studies. Additionally, our classroom had three one-to-one aids as per accommodations in specific Individualized Education Plans (IEP). The classrooms was organized in front facing rows in an effort to provide the students with access to power supplies and to ensure for ease of teacher movement around the learning

environment. Many of the research exercises took place in a secure digital environment using EDMODO.

Participants

The participants of this study were twenty, 9th grade applied level students in United States Civics and Government. The ages of the participants ranged from thirteen to sixteen years. Six of the students are identified as regular education learners and the remaining fourteen have been identified as special education students with Individualized Education Plans (IEP). The students have been randomly placed in my classroom by the school district guidance department as a result of previous teacher recommendations or through parent preference. The course section used for this study was selected at random.

Procedures

The purpose of my study is to increase individual contextual knowledge, content specific literacy engagement, and civic consideration while promoting student discussion that is directly related to the historical study in my Applied United States Civics and Government Course. The first step in this process involved submitting my application to Moravian College's Human Subjects Internal Review Board (HSIRB). The HSIRB reviewed my application in an effort to ensure that the study would be conducted in an ethical manner that would protect involved human subjects. Next, I informed my building principal about

my study and sought her written consent. Finally, I sought parental consent from all of the participants.

During the study, the students inquired, discussed, and actively participated in historical and civic engagement through the use of microblogging tools on EDMODO. The following is a timeline of how the study was laid out.

Week 1

- The teacher distributed parent consent forms.
- The students returned the completed parent consent forms.
- The teacher administered a pre-study survey.
- The teacher conducted pre-study student interviews.

Week 2

- The students individually analyzed and inquired about the advantages of educational microblogging through the analysis of a secondary source.
- The students worked in small learning communities as they identified, described, and discussed microblogging.
- The teacher created groups on the classroom EDMODO page.
- The teacher provided a detailed tutorial on the platform, format, and expectations with respect to the use of EDMODO.
- The teacher distributed EDMODO registration information and directions.
- The teacher conducted student interviews.

Week 3

- The teacher assigned initial EDMODO discussion assignment consisting of a student selected current event post on a secondary source article of their choosing. Subsequently each student wrote at least two additional peer comments or questions about information put forth by peers.

- The teacher reviewed initial EDMODO current event assignments and identified specific examples of quality student generated posts.
- The teacher actively participated in the EDMODO posting process as a means of ensuring that the students were comfortable.
- The teacher conducted small group interviews in an effort to gain an understanding of student perceptions of the overall application of EDMODO during this initial assignment.

Week 4

- The teacher introduced the initial ongoing EDMODO course connection assignment where the students needed to create a quote, comment, or question using information from the Civics and Government textbook.
- The students started the initial ongoing EDMODO course connection assignment on Chapter 3 – The United States Constitution.
- The students generated a rotating array of biweekly current event blog postings using the EDMODO microblogging environment. The topic categories were based on the first letter of the student’s last name with topics rotating every other week. To complete the current event activities the students needed to critique the thesis of the source, compare their individual perspective, and attach the resource link that they used. The initial content responsibilities were as follows:
 - A through E – Local
 - F through I – National
 - J through L – International
 - M through P – Sports
 - Q through T – The Arts
 - U through Z – Student Choice
- The students were assigned a historically significant Landmark United States Supreme Court Cases that occurred throughout our nation’s history.

This assignment was done as a way to allow the students to analyze the importance of Bill of Rights guarantees. To complete this portion of the EDMODO activity the students needed to complete a historical inquiry post about the assigned landmark ruling. To complete this post the students:

- Assessed the United States Supreme Court Case
- Analyzed and inquire about the historical significance of the ruling
- Cited a link that provided them with the information.
- The students needed to write at least two additional peer comments or questions reflecting on information put forth by their peers.
- The teacher actively participated in the EDMODO posting process as a means of ensuring that the students were comfortable.
- The teacher completed individual conference with the students about the use of EDMODO as a means of aiding independent reading and learning.

Week 5

- The students continued to work through the previously outlined Chapter 3 EDMODO responsibilities.
- The teacher reviewed the previously assigned EDMODO responsibilities with the students in an effort to ensure that the students understood individual responsibilities.
- The teacher actively participated in the EDMODO posting process as a means of ensuring that the students were comfortable.
- The teacher completed individual conference with the students about the use of EDMODO as a means of aiding independent reading and learning.

Week 6

- The students generated a rotating array of biweekly current event blog postings using the EDMODO microblogging environment. The topic categories were based on the first letter of the student's last name with

topics rotating every other week. To complete the current event activities the students needed to critique the thesis of the source, compare their individual perspective, and attach the resource link that they used. The initial content responsibilities were as follows:

- A through E – Student Choice
 - F through I – Local
 - J through L – National
 - M through P – International
 - Q through T – Sports
 - U through Z – The Arts
- The students continued to work through the previously outlined Chapter 3 EDMODO responsibilities.
 - The teacher reviewed the previously assigned EDMODO responsibilities with the students in an effort to ensure that the students understood individual responsibilities.
 - The teacher actively participated in the EDMODO posting process as a means of ensuring that the students were comfortable.
 - The teacher completed individual conference with the students about the use of EDMODO as a means of aiding independent reading and learning.

Week 7

- The students continued to work through the previously outlined Chapter 3 EDMODO responsibilities.
- The teacher reviewed the previously assigned EDMODO responsibilities with the students in an effort to ensure that the students understand individual responsibilities.
- The teacher actively participated in the EDMODO posting process as a means of ensuring that the students were comfortable.

- The teacher completed individual conference with the students about the use of EDMODO as a means of aiding independent reading and learning.
- The teacher conducted small group interviews in an effort to gain an understanding of any issues, questions, or concerns that the students have as they complete the assignment.
- The students completed a brief written reflection organizer in an effort to characterize the major successes, failures, challenges, and benefits of completing the EDMODO assignment.

Week 8

- The teacher introduced the second phase of the ongoing EDMODO course connection assignment where the students will need to create a quote, comment, or question for each of the subsequent textbook readings.
- The students started the second ongoing EDMODO course connection assignment on Chapter 4 – Rights and Responsibilities.
- The students generated a rotating array of biweekly current event blog postings using the EDMODO microblogging environment. The topic categories were based on the first letter of the student’s last name with topics rotating every other week. To complete the current event activities the students needed to critique the thesis of the source, compare their individual perspective, and attach the resource link that they used. The initial content responsibilities were as follows:
 - A through E – The Arts
 - F through I – Student Choice
 - J through L – Local
 - M through P – National
 - Q through T – International
 - U through Z – Sports

- The students were tasked with identifying a single human right that they believe is fundamental and they could not live without. To complete this portion of the EDMODO activity the students will need to make an inquiry post where they identify the human right and provide a brief explanation why they could not imagine life without it. To complete this post the students outlined the following information.
 - Identified a single human right they could not live without.
 - Paraphrased the significance of this specific human right.
 - Cited a link that provided the important information about this human right and why it is important to the rest of us and or shared an image to represent this human right.
- The students needed to write at least two additional peer comments or questions reflecting on information put forth by their peers.
- The teacher actively participated in the EDMODO posting process as a means of ensuring that the students were comfortable.
- The teacher completed individual conference with the students about the use of EDMODO as a means of aiding independent reading and learning.

Week 9

- The students continued to work through the previously outlined Chapter 4 EDMODO responsibilities.
- The teacher reviewed the previously assigned EDMODO responsibilities with the students in an effort to ensure that the students understood individual responsibilities.
- The teacher actively participated in the EDMODO posting process as a means of ensuring that the students were comfortable.
- The teacher completed individual conference with the students about the use of EDMODO as a means of aiding independent reading and learning.

Week 10

- The students continued to work through the previously outlined Chapter 4 EDMODO responsibilities.
- The students generated a rotating array of biweekly current event blog postings using the EDMODO microblogging environment. The topic categories were based on the first letter of the student's last name with topics rotating every other week. To complete the current event activities the students needed to critique the thesis of the source, compare their individual perspective, and attach the resource link that they used. The initial content responsibilities were as follows:
 - A through E – Sports
 - F through I – The Arts
 - J through L – Student Choice
 - M through P – Local
 - Q through T – National
 - U through Z – International
- The teacher reviewed the previously assigned EDMODO responsibilities with the students in an effort to ensure that the students understand individual responsibilities.
- The teacher actively participated in the EDMODO posting process as a means of ensuring that the students were comfortable.
- The teacher completed individual conference with the students about the use of EDMODO as a means of aiding independent reading and learning.
- The teacher conducted small group interviews in an effort to gain an understanding of any issues, questions, or concerns that the students have as they complete the assignment.
- The students completed a brief written reflection organizer in an effort to characterize the major successes, failures, challenges, and benefits of completing the EDMODO assignment.

Week 11

- The students combed through all of the content that they have completed up to this date in an effort to create a portfolio that best represented their individual effort within the EDMODO activity.
- The students identified work to place into the portfolio to represent the following categories; reading comments, current events, favorite submissions, and most-learned-from assignment.
- The students independently worked in an effort to create a formal portfolio for submission.
- The teacher completed individual conference with the students about the use of EDMODO as a means of aiding independent reading and learning.

Week 12

- The teacher collected the student generated portfolio assignments.
- The teacher created post-study surveys.
- The teacher conducted post-study surveys.
- The teacher completed individual conference with the students about the use of EDMODO as a means of aiding independent reading and learning.

Data Sources

In order to collect data, I had the student's complete pre-study and post-study surveys, carried out informal group conferences, and conducted individual interviews. The students also participated in a wide array of online microblogging assignments using EDMODO. EDMODO is a secure online educational resource that allows a teacher to connect students with peers, information, and additional resources that they will need in order to be successful in the 21st century classroom.

Pre-Study and Post-Study Surveys

The students were given two surveys, one at the beginning and another at the end of the study. The surveys were administered using Google Forms. At the beginning of the study, students were given a class comfort and civic identity survey, which assessed individual comfort levels in relation to impending classroom activities and knowledge of individual civic identity. Additionally, the surveys were used as a means of cataloging student interest and familiarity with microblogging. At the end of the study, students completed a microblogging interest survey that asked questions about their perceptions of how the activities related to how microblogging personally affected individual learning during this class.

Project Reflections

At the end of each chapter, students completed a comprehensive project reflection graphic organizer. The project reflection graphic organizer asked the students to reflect on how EDMODO aided individual class progress, how the students believed they could have done better within the environment, questioned the perceived usefulness of the various microblogging activities, and asked the students to provide suggestions on how to improve the activities in future incarnations of this project. To complete these graphic organizers the students reflected in an effort to distinguish the major successes, failures, challenges, and benefits of completing the EDMODO assignment.

Informal Interviews

The teacher informally met with small groups of students in an effort to assess student contribution, progress, and understanding of the overall microblogging activities. During these informal interviews the students were asked questions about the usefulness and the practicality of the microblogging assignments as well as how I could transform the EDMODO experience in a way that will be more useful in future activities. The informal interviews were used as a time when the students were able to directly communicate with the instructor about the overall activities taking place during the various activities that made up the study.

Student Microblogging

Each student used his or her district generated Google Email address to create accounts that allowed them to interact using EDMODO. Additionally, the students needed to register for this specific course within the EDMODO site. Over the course of the study the students participated in a wide range of activities by generating comments, quotations, and questions from reading assignments, generating current event analyses, and commenting on peer postings. The microblogging assignments were graded according to a 50-point rubric for the first and second marking periods. The microblogging classroom responsibilities were one of the most important pieces to the study and provided data that was

used to analyze student participation, historical knowledge, classroom discussion, and overall civic awareness.

Student Portfolios

At the end of the study, the students created an independent personal EDMODO portfolio analyzing the work that they have completed using the microblogging resource. To complete this reflection the students selected four submissions that they believe represented the best work that they completed. The students made selections to represent work from the following categories reading comments, current events, favorite submissions, and most-learned-from assignment. Once they selected representative postings, the students took screen shots of the related postings and shared them using a specifically created folder in their individual Google Drives.

Field Log

Over the course of the study, I kept a comprehensive field log. In the field log, I recorded observations that I witnessed during the associated microblogging exercises, the dialogue that occurred during subsequent peer-to-peer and teacher / student discussions, and informal conversations that manifested between students. The use of a comprehensive field log allowed me to accurately record and reflect on the experiences that my students had as they participated in the study. In order to differentiate between my observations and my thoughts, I used a digital double-entry journal. The double entry journal format allowed me to efficiently record,

properly categorize, and access the observational data that I amassed during the study.

Trustworthiness Statement

The saying goes that the truth lies in the eyes of the beholder. Traditionally, human beings possess the requisite free will to view similar situations, analyze comparable data, and formulate comprehensive conclusions in a wide array of deviating manners. As a result, Hendricks (2013) advocates that teacher action researchers follow a series of specific protocols in order to make certain that a level of trustworthiness and validity exists within consequent action research studies. Prior to completing the associated action research study, I took several steps to guarantee the development of an advanced level of trustworthiness and validity with respect to my overall comprehensive action research study process.

First, in the years leading up to this formal action research study, I completed a wide array of detailed course work within the Moravian College Education Masters Program focused on the implication of conducting meaningful action research within the field of education. Hendricks (2013) argues that teachers across the world are tirelessly attempting to research, study, and validate comprehensive educational reforms in an effort to remedy a wide array of systemic issues. This study emphasis allowed me to develop an enhanced understanding of the important characteristics of action research while realizing

the role that it can play in the transformation toward a successful modern learning environment. Furthermore, the course work at Moravian allowed me to complete a miniature action research study that permitted me to prepare for many of the distinct facets related to the development of a comprehensive action research study prior to completing my primary examination of my professional practice. As a result, I believe that the program's rigorous approach toward action research readied me to "add to my educational knowledge base" as I plan to take all appropriate steps within the action research process in a trustworthy and valid manner. (Hendricks, p.17)

Subsequently, prior to the start of my action research study, I submitted a research proposal and obtained approval from the Human Subjects Internal Review Board (HSIRB) at Moravian College. Following recognized approval, I created a formal written correspondence that outlined the purpose of my action research study, how the process will encourage me to become a better teacher, and discussed the related objectives with my principal and study participants in an effort to ensure that I properly outlined the characteristics of the study and received written consent for their active participation. The participants for this action research study were selected at random based their inclusion in my class roster for the 2014/2015 school year. The consent letters clearly delineate that a state of anonymity exists throughout all publications related to the study with each participant being described using a researcher created pseudonym. Additionally,

throughout the study, all of the associated research data remained securely locked in a desk in my home office, with all related records being destroyed at the conclusion of the associated action research.

Customarily, many researchers face a reliability and validity challenge when completing an action research study. Typically, action research is being completed with a specific goal in mind and the researcher must recognize that not all objectives will be realized. Hendricks (2013) suggests that the outcomes related to divergent forms of action research are often examined differently depending on the result of the study data, system of data collection, and the subsequent process being employed to complete the research-backed investigation. In order to overcome any potential challenges, I incorporated an assortment of data including pre-study and post-study field logs, a teacher generated personal observation journal, individual stakeholder interviews, and a compilation of student work derived through individual student participation on the education specific social networking site EDMODO. This amount of data can be overwhelming, but researchers need to “determine the types of data that must be collected to lead to meaningful, accurate, and appropriated conclusions regarding research questions.” (Hendricks, p. 88) To further ensure the reliability of my study, I analyzed the comprehensive data continually throughout the entire action research process in an effort to track the emergence of common themes that subsequently guided the research toward a particular premise. Furthermore,

Hendricks (2013) contends that teachers completing action research should strive to analyze data in a precise manner to ensure that they recognize the existence of themes present within surveys, interviews, observations and student work.

Personally, I found that the use of this comprehensive analysis allowed me to understand unique characteristics that existed in my data while becoming more adept at foreseeing the transformation occurring in my classroom. Moreover, the comprehensive investigation related to the implementation of action research allowed me to recognize any shortcomings that existed within my data sources and permitted me to make the necessary modifications to fill inconsistencies in a manner that benefited the overall educational experience. Finally, in an effort to organize the information in a useable framework, I generated a coding index, graphic organizer, and a series of related theme statements to more clearly classify the related data being compiled during the research study.

The overall study length represents an additional contributing factor for ensuring comprehensive trustworthiness and validity. The entire study spanned an approximate period of three months and subsequently afforded ample time to determine the existence of commonalities and or questions that arose as a result of the collection of research data. Hendricks (2013) states that action researchers often experience varying forms of appropriate validity when implementing a comprehensive action research study. To ensure transparency within the process she recommends that researchers first, use an observation journal as a means to

document the existence of an environment of descriptive validity since journaling allows the researcher to proactively record observations and thoughts about the events occurring for later analysis during prolonged periods of action research. Furthermore, surveys and interviews were also used as a means of ensuring a valid situation by demonstrating that the positive and negative viewpoints of the participants were properly documented, understood, and subsequently analyzed. Lastly, my comprehensive review of the associated academic literature through the conclusion of a comprehensive literature review was an additional example of academic validity in that I examined how the existing research aligns with purpose and goals my study, thus ensuring that my research is both academically robust, credible, and defensible.

Finally, the trustworthiness and validity of my study was also supported through my personal reporting of professional biases that I had in relation to the outcomes of my teacher action research. (Hendricks, 2013) Professionally, I pride myself in continually working to develop an enhanced connected learning environment that engages my students using as many technological instructional tools as possible. However, my affection for the use of educational technology is representative of a bias given that I started this action research study believing that the use of educational technology would benefit my students. Additionally, I trust that incorporating technology in the modern classroom setting is beneficial to the development of my students as they become interactive members of our

increasingly connected society. Teaching my students how to manipulate technology while encouraging personal historical understanding allows me to transfer both skills and knowledge that I believe will be beneficial in a multitude of divergent personal and professional settings. However, despite these beliefs, I understand that not all students will immediately distinguish the value in actively participating within the related microblogging activities present within this action research study. As a result, I kept a detailed observation journal in an effort to properly document the opinions and beliefs of my students and myself in order to provide the appropriate data to support my findings as it concerns my study and the use of technology to improve student engagement in the classroom.

Concurrently, I needed to remain open minded to the fact that I might not get the results that I am hoping for, and that there was potential that I might have to make adjustments, when necessary, based on the subsequent observations and reflections that could redirect my study in a direction that may counter my previously held beliefs.

dedicate myself to consuming as much conventional literature as possible in an effort to determine how to better my instructional practices through the use of available forms of technology. Like most educational professionals, I have had to make the best with the tools that I was given; yet I continually yearned for more. Today, access to quality forms of educational technology is often a tale of the haves and have-nots. For the majority of my tenure, I faced limited financial resources and or short-sided district technology goals. As a result, teaching with technology had often been more of an experimental tactic rather than full-blown component of my day-to-day instructional practices and never the primary dynamic that guided my teacher student interactions.

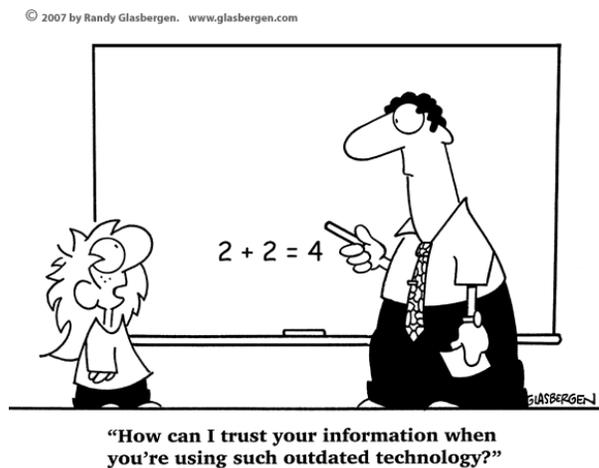


Figure 2. A cartoon representing the emotions I had teaching in a classroom with outdated access to contemporary forms of instructional technology

Professionally, this intense desire to incorporate instructional technology as a means of transforming the learning environment encouraged me to

incessantly seek specialized instructional opportunities in a school district that shared my vision for teaching and learning while incorporating far-reaching forms of vigorous instructional technology into day-to-day student interactions. With this idea in mind, I continually scanned the employment prospects available at some of the more technologically progressive school districts across the Lehigh Valley hoping that sooner or later I would land an opportunity with a locality that would permit me to develop my professional repertoire in a manner that focused on the application of computers into the related teaching and learning.

Seeking New Opportunities

Securing a teaching position in the current marketplace has become exceedingly challenging. Pushing myself to continually innovate while seeking a unique professional opportunity led me to discover a local high school that was in search of a full time contracted Gifted Support/Social Studies instructor. The high school was located in a neighboring district that had developed a technologically focused reputation due to the recent realization of a one-to-one computing policy. The transition toward a connected educational strategy had recently brought about national recognition for the entire school district as a Project RED Signature District and as an APPLE Distinguished Program for Innovation, Leadership, and Educational Excellence.



Figure 3. Project RED Logo.



Figure 4. APPLE Distinguished Program logo.

As a result, all students in grades 9 through 12 were provided a MacBook Pro Laptop computer that they subsequently used to complement day-to-day instructional activities. The thought of being able to incorporate across-the-board educational methods developed alongside the use of modern technology was a thrill and my goal quickly became securing an interview for this position. I immediately prepared my application, submitted it, and patiently waited.

There was however, an unforeseen problem lurking on the horizon. Based on the established application timeline, it looked like the interviews might fall when I was scheduled to be out of the country on my honeymoon. Months earlier, my wife and I planned a holiday to celebrate our wedding several thousand miles

away touring the island nation of Iceland. The application submission interval closed the day we departed and I subsequently arranged international calling in the event that I would receive an offer to interview. Luckily that call came after a long day of hiking and exploring various geological sights in the Myvatn region of Northeast Iceland. Initially, the district requested that I arrive for an interview the following day obviously this would not be possible since I was over two thousand miles away and in the middle of my honeymoon. Consequently, I explained that I was on vacation and that it would be impossible to attend an in person interview at that time. The representative from the district unfortunately clarified that I would not be able to secure an interview. I was devastated.

My wife patiently sat across from me in an Icelandic pizza parlor gazing at me for a sign while waiting for any of the details from the phone call. My expression told her all she needed to know. Several tense minutes passed and my phone again rang out. Without delay the voice on the other end asked if I would be available for an interview the following Monday. My mind raced as I quickly replied yes. With that, I had my opportunity. Subsequently, the thought of this position and the related interview occupied my mind for the remainder of the trip and I spent the entire flight home preparing for this exceptional opportunity to realize my professional aspirations teaching with dynamic forms of comprehensive educational aspirations.



Figure 5. Picture of Dyrhólaey taken during our drive to the Myvatan region in Northeast Iceland.

Throughout the interview process, I focused my intense desire to teach at an instructional technology leader in the Lehigh Valley and allowed those aspirations to push me to prepare in a manner that ensured I would be asked to be the newest member of this schools staff. After several interviews, featuring a number of very challenging conversations, I was offered employment. My life was about to change; all I needed to do now was wait for the next school board meeting to complete the hiring process. Professionally, I had not been more excited. The focus on the development of intense instructional technology ensured

that I would be able to transform the means that I used to complete traditional instructional activities. However, as with most milestones, nothing is ever as easy as you hope. Following my approval by the local education authority I submitted my letter of resignation.

Wait, Just a Little Longer

Leaving my current job proved to be more difficult than I had previously anticipated. Traditionally, contracted social studies positions are highly sought after with hundreds of qualified candidates actively in search of gainful employment. Therefore, I did not predict that my old district would experience any issues finding an appropriate replacement prior to the start of the 2014-2015 school year. In hindsight, it appears that I was naïve in my thinking. Upon submitting my resignation, the principal explained that I would likely experience a professional hold for a period of no less than one month and not exceeding sixty days. He justified this position by stating that the timing was such that they would not be able to complete the interview and hiring process prior to the last scheduled school board meeting in advance of the upcoming school year. Devastation does not begin to explain how I felt. The complete exaltation that previously rushed through my veins quickly slipped away. I did not know what to think, how I should proceed, or who to call. Almost in tears, I walked out of the building.

Once I got my bearings, I contacted my new principal to break the news. She took the information unexpectedly well and immediately asked what she

could do to support me during this difficult transition. Her assurances calmed my nerves, yet I was still incredibly disappointed. For the most part everyone at both schools was helpful and understanding during this awkward transition. Individuals at both schools worked with me to ensure that I was comfortable, connected, and generally provided with all of the necessary resources I needed to successfully complete my interrelated professional responsibilities. After an extended period of personal and professional reflection, I came to the conclusion that the best thing for my students would be to pour myself into this bizarre opportunity and make the most of teaching at two places at once.

During my tenure, I have tirelessly worked to develop a reputation steeped in a certain degree of unambiguous professionalism. This desire to remain above the fray led me to explicitly attempt to take on the professional duties of both positions to the highest possible measure. Subsequently, I wasted little time and got to work. For a period of a little over thirty days, I planned instructional activities for my students at each school, drafted a variety of mailings to send home to the gifted student population I was tasked with overseeing, and worked hours that expanded well beyond those held by conventional teachers. During this time I was exhausted and generally overwhelmed.

To make matters worse, I was also in the midst of completing the related preparations in accordance with the commencement of this action research study at a school that I never previously worked in. I would be completely mistaken if I

did not admit that the circumstances were at times, complicated. However, having to work both positions reaffirmed my love for teaching due in large part to the fact that I was able to reacquaint myself with the underlying purpose of the job, the students. The one bright spot of experiencing a period of a professional hold was that it provided a truly unique transition from one position to the next. At the end of the previous school year I wholly intended on teaching at my original school and as a result did not have an opportunity to say goodbye to the individual students who played consequential roles in my professional development. Therefore, during my extended stay following my resignation, I was able to view my closing time as a victory lap where I could express my gratitude to former students and colleagues as I wished them luck in future pursuits. Looking back, this was a component of the process that I was thankful for. After a period of forty-five days, I completed my final full week of school and received my formal departure notice. Monday was a new day and I was excited to finally meet my new students.

At Last

For most teachers, the first day of a new school year is one of the principal joys of the profession. Personally, I am often overcome with an amalgamation of anxiety and excitement on the first day of school. Groups of individuals come together and experience something that is both novel and exciting, experiment with diverse learning strategies, and generally encounter a fresh start that is

characteristic to teaching. This pseudo first day was no different and the enthusiasm was palpable. However, meeting students for the first time in such a disjointed manner presented an extra set of distinct challenges. Traditionally, teachers meet students on the first day of school and the two groups get to know one another succinctly. This unceremonious feeling out process is accomplished in such a manner that both the students and teacher are able to appreciate specific dynamics that might exist within the learning environment and make any necessary changes that result from initial interactions or specific examples of necessary redirection. This progression ultimately allows for the growth of intuitional norms in a manner that promotes clear distinctions between the two separate groups. Coming into a classroom following my professional hold presented several complex concerns and subsequently translated into a distinct learning curve for both the students and myself.

The existence of an untraditional starting point was odd. My first days in this new classroom were wrought with managerial challenges that needed to be immediately addressed. Essentially, for more than thirty day the students had grown used to the laidback disciplinary style of my special education co-teacher and the menagerie of substitutes who filled in for me. Sarah, who like myself was new to the school proved to be exceptionally difficult. From the preliminary bell on my first day she made her opinion very clear when she shouted in front of the entire class that she “was not going to listen to anything I had to say.” It

immediately became apparent that Sarah wanted to establish herself as someone who was going to question anything that myself, my co-teacher, or any additional adult in the classroom had to say. Teacher redirection and Sarah became synonymous during this action research study with some significant issues materializing during my preliminary experience in my new position.

At first, I had a clear feeling that my function in this situation was bizarre. First and foremost, I am accountable for teaching and monitoring the high schools gifted student population through the creation and maintenance of Gifted Individualized Education Plans (GIEP). On top of this considerable responsibility, I am also the content instructor for two applied level history courses, one for 9th and another for 10th grade. These divergent learning environments required a significant amount of contradictory planning and preparation. Accordingly preparing for these two distinctive learning environments proved to be more difficult than I previously anticipated. Luckily, both of the Applied level courses are co-taught meaning that they have a special education professional who is certified in social studies working alongside the students in an effort to ensure that each student is provided with the least restrictive learning environment in accordance to their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) needs.

Looking back, the initial encounter with my students was not terrible but it was also not ideal. When I walked into the research study class for the first time the majority of my students were welcoming. Alice stated, “You are finally here!”

Frank asked, “What took so long?” and Carl was quick to comment that he “liked having a substitute better.” These initial interactions were emblematic and they hold little relevance within the overall function of the action research but they were moving since they signified that I was actually where I needed to be in order to complete the related processes that I had been preparing for over the past two years.

Prior to starting the study, I felt that it was important to take some time to properly introduce myself. Following my introduction I opened the floor to student questions. Sarah’s hand shot up with feverish velocity as she shouted, “Why are there so many adults in this classroom?” Sarah was correct; as I stood waiting to answer her somewhat irrelevant question there were 6 adults, including myself present in the classroom. Three of the adults are certified teachers and the remaining three were instructional aids. Explaining the general dynamics of the role that these adults held was not an appropriate conversation to have with a student. Currently, four students in the classroom have profound learning disabilities that require the school district to provide one-on-one attention in an effort to ensure individual academic achievement. Rather than describe these unnecessary semantics I explained that the existence of 6 adults in the classroom was an opportunity to ensure the success of each student and that she should not view our presence as a communal punishment. She quickly and succinctly disagreed with a resounding “no” and proceeded to explain that all of the adults in

the classroom made her “nervous” and continued her argument as she explained that all of the adults actually “prevented her from focusing.” This outburst showcased a need to quickly redirect in this classroom environment; a skill that would come in handy during future student related face-to-face conversations and instructional activities.

My first day was in the books and it felt like a success. This academically diverse student population had the ability to present any teacher with some explicit demands. Having 14 students in a single classroom identified as special education students with Individualized Education Plans (IEP) ensured that I would be working closely with my co-teacher and the related teachers aids. The makeup of the student body guaranteed that all of the planning and preparation for this course must not only be rigorous but properly align with the needs of all the students in an effort to establish the least restrictive educational environment. Despite the presence of some complex personalities and considerable individual needs I was thankful to have finally arrived, and I looked forward to introducing the students to EDMODO as soon as possible.

Let’s Get This Study Started

After we exchanged pleasantries, took some time to get to know one another, and finished the current section in United States Civics and Government it was time to move on to new content and introducing students to the use of EDMODO. Already several weeks behind, I devised a plan to begin the study and

complete a pre-study survey during the same class period. Prior to meeting my students, I hoped that they would be excited to take part in this action research study, but once we started it appeared that they were generally not excited about school. Class started with an explanation that I was engaged in graduate school in an effort to improve my teaching. Sarah, quietly under her breath muttered “thank god.” Up to this point my relationship with her had revolved around a rotating array of student outbursts and subsequent teacher redirection. I had become accustomed to her behavior. She likely did not enjoy my addition to this classroom and made sure to let me know it every chance she could get. While I spoke, I noticed certain students staring off into space, others were intently listening, and another student James had his phone out texting. My co-teacher quietly made his way around the room-redirecting students whom he believed needed to refocus. Based on the student’s initial reactions, I started to feel that gaining widespread student “buy in” with respect to this action research study was going to be difficult and perhaps impossible. It was the first day of the study and already many of the students seemed like they could care less.

Once I completed the study introduction, it was time for the students to take a baseline survey using Google Forms. The survey was fashioned through the use of Google Forms due to the fact that this resource is easy to use and simple to distribute. The final product provided a wealth of valuable analytics that aided in development of a meaningful understanding of the associated information. Since

we operate in a one-to-one computing environment, I posted the link to the survey on Google Classroom. Google Classroom is an application within the Google Apps for Education where teachers can create and organize virtual assignments in an expedited manner while enabling timely and efficient feedback in a collaborative and interactive environment. Generally, the students were able to log into Google Classroom and they started on the survey without any issue. Having so many adults in the classroom allowed us to mitigate any concerns that arose without those problems causing a disturbance. This proved to be exceedingly beneficial since a small distraction could cause significant issues.

Many students' initial positive outlooks quickly soured when they saw the number of questions on the survey. As the students opened the survey, I carefully and completely read each question aloud. This was done in an effort to provide proper prequalification on each question and as a means of ensuring that each student had a reasonable understanding of my expectations as they took the survey. Alice scrolled to the bottom and asked, "do we really have to read and answer all of these?" and Carl stated, "he was done" after only opening the document. At this point I reaffirmed the importance of this survey to my students and explained that this was one of the simplest grades that they would complete during this school year. Once we got past the initial moaning and groaning, the students settled in and got to work.

As the students worked through the various questions within the survey I walked around the classroom in an effort to observe individual student participation. This was done to provide further clarification if a student needed it and in an effort to monitor how the students were interacting within the Google Drive environment as they completed the Google Forms Survey. The students understood all of the questions and finished their responsibilities without issue.

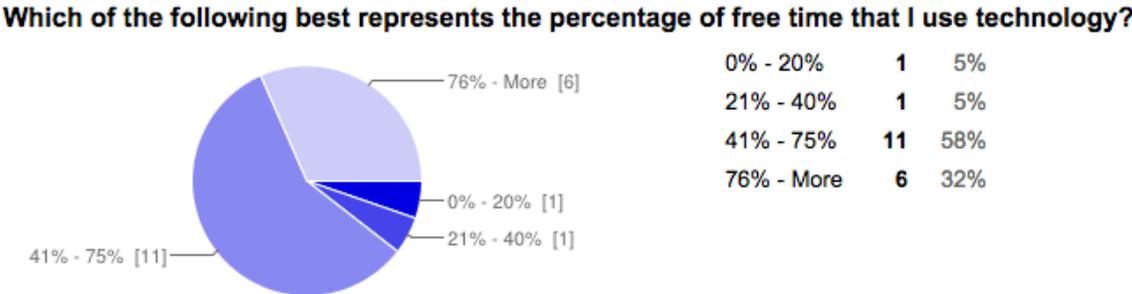


Figure 6. Pre-Study Survey Example #1.

The initial results from this baseline technology survey provided valuable information about the role of technology in my student’s daily educational and personal interactions. Generally, the survey responses showcased the transformative function of technology in day-to-day student behaviors. This generation of individuals has grown up manipulating technology as a means of simplifying life. The results from this survey demonstrated this distinction and allowed me to actually understand with greater certainty how important

educational technology has been in my student’s requisite educational activities. Personally, I discovered two distinct takeaways from the survey results.

First, the pre-study surveys demonstrated that my students overwhelmingly spend a significant amount of their individual free time dedicated to the use of technology. Seventeen of the nineteen students reported that they spent at least 41% of their free time by manipulating some different form of technology. This fact was noteworthy since it allowed me to further understand the relationship that the application of technology held in my students’ lives. Knowing that my students attempted to incorporate technology into their daily routines especially during non-school hours allowed me to tailor our academic use of divergent forms of educational technology in a manner that better promoted dynamic learning while simultaneously mimicking behaviors and activities that these students accomplished in their free time.

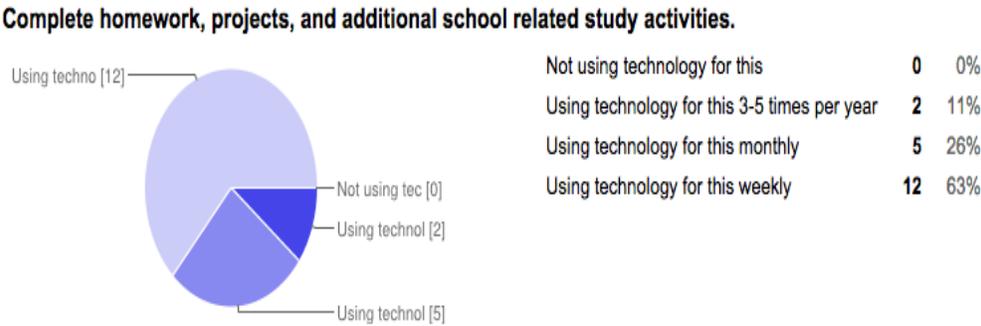


Figure 7. Pre-Study Survey Example #2.

Secondly, the purpose that educational technology played in the lives of my students was illustrated by the answers that they gave with regards to the function that computers occupy in individual completion of homework, projects, and additional school related study activities. Again, the use of technology was important. Seventeen of the nineteen students reported that they use technology routinely as they completed these proceedings. Although this may seem obvious in a district that has adopted a one-to-one computing policy, there are still many teachers who simply have not worked to properly integrate these technological tools into daily instructional activities. As a result, many students are left to develop a means of incorporating the computer on their own. The majority of the students (63%) reported that they used technology to complete classroom activities on a weekly basis. Again, as a baseline statistic this was important since the action research study was developed in an effort to enhance the use of instructional technology in daily educational routines. Knowing that the students have attempted to adopt technology on their own and are comfortable with their subsequent use was important in the design of the overall instructional process.

What is EDMODO?

Introducing a new instructional tool can lead to a wealth of interesting outcomes. Some of these outcomes could aid in the development of positive learning outcomes and others might have the power to negatively shape student outcomes. Typically, attempting to bring about substantive change in an

educational environment requires an understanding that not all student behaviors and final products can be wholly controlled. Furthermore, teachers must understand that there is a learning curve associated with the integration of new tools and therefore must plan accordingly. Generally, students, like teachers, are creatures of habit. Asking them to do something that is out of the norm or against the typical protocol can be met with inconsistent results and even adverse behavioral reactions. Introducing the related EDMODO content to my students was initially met with student disinterest, difficult behaviors, and some additional unforeseen challenges.

On the day we instituted the EDMODO transformation we started class with a straightforward warm-up question. The prompt tasked each student to identify the format they would most likely enjoy using as a classroom tool; pencil/paper, laptop / Microsoft Word, laptop / Google Docs, or a form of social media (Facebook/Twitter were provided as examples). Each student had to select one option from the list and rationalize their selection using 2-3 complete sentences.

Initially, many of the students balked at the question. Some wondered why they should answer, and others questioned if there should be other options beyond those that they were provided. As I walked around the classroom it quickly became clear that the students needed reassurance. As I approached Jeff's desk, I noticed that all he had written for the warm up was the number 5. The options

were not numbered and even if they were, there was no option 5. Carl was simply sitting at his desk staring off into space. Sarah had written paper and pencil and a decently sized paragraph explaining why she would prefer this choice. However, upon further review she actually explained that she dislikes all schoolwork and each of the options would require too much effort.

After several minutes of independent reflection I attempted to engage the students around this prompt and actively sought volunteers to share what they had written. Frank's hand shot up and he waved it wildly. I called on Frank in an effort to start the conversation in a positive manner. Frank explained that he has enjoyed using Google the most because he felt that using Google has prevented him from losing papers and having to carry lots of notebooks from class to class. Frank explained that he does not like losing papers or carrying notebooks.

Next I called on Alice. She did not have her hand up but I wanted to call on both volunteers and non-volunteers. She explained that she would like to use her cell phone; although this was not specifically an option I attempted to keep the conversation going and I asked if social media on her cell phone would satisfy her desires, to which she plainly replied "yes." We spent the next ten minutes going back and forth about the pros and cons of the various formats. For the most part, each student had some preference with several students explaining that they did not really care since they would not be interested in completing work, regardless of the format. This activity showcased the basic fundamental difficulty that

teachers face when implementing instructional transformations, there is no one size fits all approach. The students were less concerned with the beneficial components or uses of new forms of instructional technology and sometimes they are openly unfavorable toward the associated changes. Following the warm up, I introduced the students to the basic EDMODO social media interface we would be using to complete the actions related to this research project.

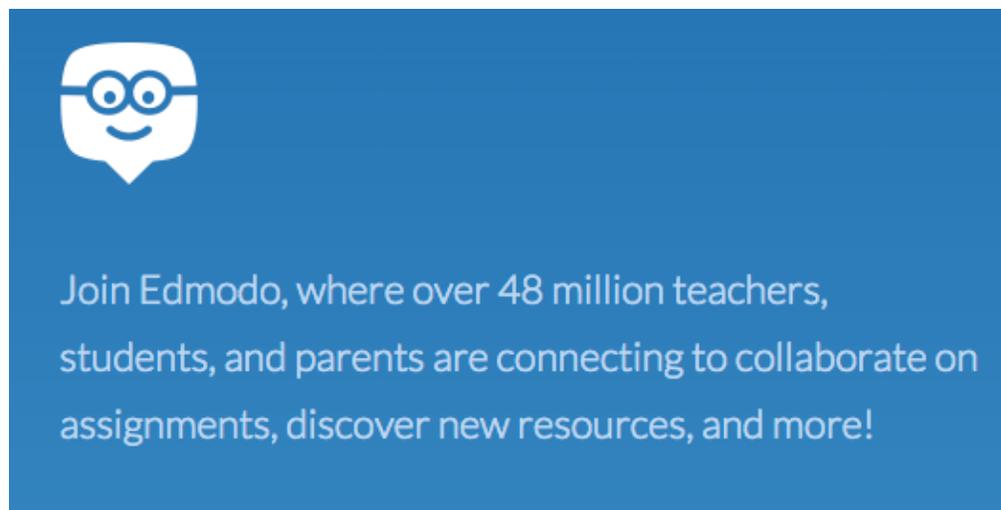


Figure 8. EDMODO Banner.

When the students first saw EDMODO I could hear a wide range of incongruous comments. Someone whispered “why is he on Facebook” another said, “Facebook is wack.” Although I was unable to pinpoint the source of these comments, I was a bit optimistic due to the fact that they were sharing any opinion, positive or negative. Before we could formally begin, the students had to complete the common registration process. In an effort to ensure that the registration would go as seamless as possible, I decided that we would complete

the related registration as a group. This decision worked well and the basic registration was completed quickly, without any major issues. So far, everything was going better than I had anticipated. Personally, I attribute this early success to the fact that each student had already been assigned an email address by the school district using Google and therefore they were all well aware of their email and related login procedures for that email. Additionally, for whatever reason the students generally followed the initial directions. Again, having more adults in the classroom than is normal aided this process. We were successfully registered within a period of 15 minutes.

While the students worked on the registration I did note some interesting comments. Initially, many of them continued to lament how the universal design of the EDMODO interface mirrored Facebook. More specifically, Alice commented how she already “did not like EDMODO cause Facebook is for old people.” Jeff questioned if EDMODO had taken this design without the knowledge of Facebook and directly asked me “if Facebook sued EDMODO?” Sarah called EDMODO “Facebook for school” and explained that it might be “the only thing that she hated more than Facebook.” For my part, I was happy that they were focusing enough on the use of this tool to even bring it up in their casual conversations. Positive or negative, the students were focused and followed directions.

Since these students can be classified as digital natives, I felt that it was important to expose them as early as possible to the entire range of tools within the EDMODO program. During our initial interactions, it was clear that despite everything else most of them were at worst technologically competent and at best savvy users. Exposing them to anything less than the full experience would have been a disservice to their inherent skills. As a result, we wasted no time encouraging comprehensive use by having the students complete an individual current event analysis via the newly created EDMODO accounts. To complete this assignment, the students were tasked with identifying, summarizing, and analyzing the implication of a current event using certain established criteria. Essentially, this initial EDMODO post would allow the student to demonstrate an ability to use the interface while providing a baseline insight into individual microblogging abilities. Additionally, I viewed this initial experience as an opportunity to iron out any associated kinks that the students might have had as they completed the preliminary posting of the soon to be ritualized process.

This initial assignment seemed to have the students somewhat concerned. Several individuals raised their hands, others called out for help, and by and large the classroom was awash with academic uncertainty and tension. Frank asked “How do we submit the assignment when we are done?” Jeff simply said, “Do you want us to post current events links on this?” The students were confused and I was unsure how to facilitate comprehensive understanding. Things were taking a

decided turn in the wrong direction and something had to be done. Recognizing that I needed to intervene, I simply returned to my computer and asked for the student's attention. At this point I explained that I was going to model what we would like them to do and I started completing a current event for them all to see using my laptop that was connected to the classroom LCD projector. Step-by-step I completed the various components of the current event assignment. As I worked, I could feel the collective sigh and several students commented almost in unison "That's it?" The tension was exiting the room and the sound of keyboards could be heard from one corner to the other. As I moved around the classroom, I witnessed my students attentively working and an assortment of adults attempting to support the student population in any way that they could.

~Current Event Topic - Red tide could hit Florida's Economy

There have been reports of red tide near Florida. Red tide is a toxic algae that can kill sea turtles, sharks, and fish. It is bad for Florida because it makes beaches gross and dirty and beaches matter to Florida's economy. Red tide has a toxin that is released paralyzes wild life. Scientists and other part-time people are keeping an eye on it, but have no say on when or where it is going to lead to next.

I picked this article because because it is interesting how many things can...

[Show Full Post](#)



Figure 9. Current Event Example #1

This initial foray was going as good as could be expected. I was satisfied seeing everyone intently staring at his or her laptop screen. For the most part, after the initial hiccup this initial assignment went off without a hindrance. However

the trial by fire attempt at the use of EDMODO demonstrated that modeling the overall process, expectations, and final product using the LCD projector could prove to be beneficial. Many of my students in this learning environment face some form of auditory processing disorder whereas others struggle with lengthy reading comprehension. As a result, allowing them to see the step-by-step development unfold in front of them was profoundly beneficial and represented an accommodation that would assist each student in the class. As the students continued to work, I walked from desk to desk answering as many questions as I could while I inspected the progress that each student made.

For my current event I decided to pick an article about the spread of Ebola around Africa. No matter the channel you turn on someone is talking about Ebola because so many people are catching it in Africa and now other people are scared its going to come this way. The article is talking about how people are scared that Ebola might be a "threat to international peace and security." This article talked about how the World Health Organization stated that more than 2,600 people have died from Ebloa and more than 5,000 people have become infected. I do not think Ebola will become a big problem in the United States because our conditions are much better than Africa. I do think we should help them though. [Show Less](#)



Figure 10. Current Event Example #2

Most of the students shared two similar struggles during this initial EDMODO assignment. First, almost all of the students labored in their pursuit of specific current event sources that they found both interesting and or engaging. This process took far too long and some were not able to find a source, read it,

and complete the related posting without considerable adult assistance. Giving each student the freedom to select current event sources without providing additional guidance proved to provide too much academic independence and resulted in students struggling to find direction. Secondly, the students had some difficulty within the general interface like being able to attach the requisite source links or understanding the way that the individual actions interacted within the source itself. Carl asked for assistance multiple times throughout this process and his questions ranged from complex to simple. He wanted to understand how EDMODO worked whereas many of the other students just wanted to complete the assignment. This appeared to be representative of a common challenge a teacher using technology would face. Some students are naturally curious and others view specific assignments for what they are and want to complete the related activities without issue. I have come to understand that some students, like Carl actively seek adult assistance in an effort to have the majority of the work dictated to them rather than independently completing complex activities. Myself and the other adults in the room need to become more adept at supporting our students rather than providing answers.

I got my current event from an article on the Lehigh Valley Live website. The article is from the local section and is about the steps that local hospitals like Hunterdon Healthcare are taking to create a plan in the event a patient is diagnosed with the Ebola virus in that county in New Jersey. In this Plan the counties in New Jersey would work with the CDC to make sure that everyone is ready to help someone who would be infected. Personally, I am scared about Ebola coming to Pennsylvania and I decided to read this article because the Ebola virus is spreading very quickly and people are dying because of the virus and it's important to know if doctors have a plan to treat Ebola if it does come to this part of the country. [Show Less](#)



Figure 11. Current Event Example #3

The more comfortable the students got, the deeper they ventured into the EDMODO activity. The final current events that the students generated represented a higher level of inquiry and deliberation than they had previously attained during non-EDMODO assignments. The level of investigation, analysis, and the effort that made-up the student work where some students completed reflection that pushed them to the brink of their individual ability levels. Although it took some significant teacher prompting, the effort put into these postings led to meaningful course specific discussions. Student responses ranged from those that I was very impressed by to those that could use work, yet the essence of the final products were thoughtful. It was a strong first step toward developing an understanding of the purpose of generating a connected civic-minded study of United States Civics and Government.

I was generally encouraged by what I saw. Subsequently, I felt that the students demonstrated that they were prepared to move forward with the primary

portion of the major assignment during the subsequent class period. This initial activity was promising and it provided encouragement that the students were capable of participating in a more significant historical study, analysis, and discussion using EDMODO during our next class period.

Like Riding a Bicycle

After the positive results of our initial EDMODO current event activity I felt that the students were ready to start incorporating the related instructional activities into our daily United States Civics and Government learning processes. Subsequently, I started the following class period by distributing the paperwork outlining the first major component of the Chapter 3, United States Constitution EDMODO Assignment. To complete this activity, the students needed to generate one EDMODO posting showcasing a comment, question, or direct quotation about the content related to the reading from Chapter 3, the United States Constitution, complete a related analysis on an assigned Landmark United States Supreme Court Case, and continue to document a rotating array of current event abstracts. Additionally, the students needed to directly comment on at least two peer postings as a means of showcasing the development of civic-minded discussion practices.

Guided Reading

Each student will be responsible for creating **ONE** (1) inquiry themed question, content specific quotation, or analysis comment of the related historical themes per section of the assigned chapter. Additionally, you may post a picture, illustration, or info graphic that you believe properly addresses any of the outlined historical themes within the Civics and Practice: Principals of Government and Economics. These guided reading posts must symbolize individual analysis on the part of the student completing the post. Examples of quality posts appear below.

Sections 1 – Ideals of the Constitution

Section 2 – The Three Branches of Government

Section 3 – An Enduring Document

Figure 12. Guided Reading Assignment, Chapter 3.

Understandably, the students were shocked by the sheer amount of work related to the incorporation of EDMODO into the course. This is an applied level course filled with students who primarily received special education services through the completion of Individualized Education Plans. It is safe to say that most of these students were not used to this much responsibility in their academic environments and that the associated expectations took some adjustments by the majority of those involved, including the adults. In an effort to support the existence of a heightened workload, I designed several EDMODO workdays into my lesson plans so our Civics and Government schedule would ensure that the students were properly provided with enough time to complete the interconnected expectations. Additionally, the supplementary time was intended to impart each student with the necessary academic support that they might have needed to appropriately finish the associated course work in a consequential manner.

Landmark Supreme Court Cases

Every student will randomly be assigned a historically significant Landmark United State Supreme Court Case. To complete this portion of the EDMODO activity you will need to make **ONE** inquiry post about the assigned United States Supreme Court Case. To complete this posting you will need to do the following:

1. **DESCRIBE** the United States Supreme Court Case.
2. **ANALYZE** and **INQUIRE** about the historical significance of the ruling.
3. **CITE** a link that gives information about the person.

Figure 13. Landmark Supreme Court Case Assignment, Chapter 3

From the start, the students were behaving differently. Following the morning announcements, I asked the students to close the lids of their laptops as I distributed the related directions for the first installment of the EDMODO project. As the students passed the papers back the grumblings grew louder. During my short tenure as these students' teacher, I have found that they are particularly adverse to coursework that they collectively feel has too many directions or that appears to be filled with specific guidelines. Essentially, they relate the amount of directions with the level of difficulty or effort that they will have to put forth. Sarah quickly stood out as a principal dissenter as she whispered "WTF" to the student sitting behind her. She quickly snapped her head around and placed it flat on her desk. This brazen reaction was emblematic with those that several other students were feeling and I understood that I again had to act in an effort to calm their escalating insecurities. Immediately, I started to clarify the expectations related to the assignment and moved to ensure that the directions did in fact look

much worse than they actually were. Most students did not believe me with Jess asking if “they really had to do this?”

Current Event

Each student will share **AT LEAST ONE** current event article from a source of their choosing with an appropriate inquiry summary attached. The students will share the link, analyze the significant of the content of the current event article, and explain why they choose this article over all other options.

Students will use the first letter of their last name to identify a section of news to draw a current event from.

A through E – Student Choice

F through I – Local

J through L – National

M through P – International

Q through T – Sports

U through Z – Arts

Figure 14. Current Event Assignment, Chapter 3

As I attempted to engage the students in a more detailed discussion about the overall assignment, I felt like I was talking directly to a wall. Learning from my previous mistake, I had already created examples of each portion of the assignment and placed them directly on the EDMODO page for the students to view. Step-by-step, I covered the principal responsibilities in relation to the civic-minded EDMODO tasks for Chapter 3, the United States Constitution. As we made our way down the sheet it appeared that some students were engaged and comfortable while others seemed uneasy. As my explanation came to a close, Alice looked bewildered as she raised her hand and said, “can you explain it again, I don’t get it.” I was frustrated. My extreme level of disappointment was not singularly connected to Alice but more targeted at myself. I thought I had the entire process figured out and realistically believed that the students would

understand their responsibilities in part due to the prior planning that I had put together to present this portion of the assignment.

Peer Comments

Each student will be responsible for commenting on **AT LEAST TWO (2)** posting from their peers over the course of the chapter. These comments can be focused on an agreement of a peer's content point, a contradictory comment about a peer's content point, and or an additional point of discussion.

Figure 15. Peer Comment Assignment, Chapter 3

Clearly, I had not reached a point where I truly understood the level of clarification that my students required in order to grasp certain directions. I needed to think more like them as I explained the directions. Regaining my composure, I asked the students to raise their hands if they needed further clarification. Five hands shot into the air. Talking with my co-teacher, I explained that I would like to take these students next-door and describe the process again while the other students stared. He agreed and we moved the students next-door. In the smaller learning environment, I was able to complete a more detailed one-on-one interaction with the five students. After about ten minutes of additional discussion I asked Alice and the others if they felt like they had a better understanding to this they answered a resounding yes. However, at the same time Jeff stated that he believed he would not be able to complete the connected activities in a manner that was acceptable stating that there was “just too much work.” I attempted to reassure him that he was going to get everything done.

In an effort to further restore confidence for Jeff, I explained to him that the purpose of our use of EDMODO was to allow each student an opportunity to demonstrate what he or she understood using the related methods that expanded beyond conventional tests. Furthermore, I explained that he had the freedom to provide as much or as little detail as he deemed fit, citing his ability to determine how much was needed to achieve a specific civic-minded point. In an attempt to explain the overall activity better to meet Jeff's needs I further clarified it to all of the students. Essentially, the students had a hard time grasping that they had the freedom to really take this activity and turn it into something that uniquely represented the information that they found important within their individual study of United States Civics and Government. After this short conversation Jeff and the others seemed to recognize what I meant and I started to feel more comfortable. We moved back and rejoined our class.

As we stepped into the classroom, I was overcome with a feeling of astonishment. The students whom I left behind with my co-teacher and teachers aids were working. Some had headphones in and others were discussing the assignment amongst themselves but all of their faces were affixed on screens or textbooks and the room was filled with the sound of fingers tapping away at keyboards. The level of surprise amplified as I walked around and the only webpage I witnessed on the screens was EDMODO. Things were going well.

Walking from desk to desk, the students appeared to be engaged. Sarah, was my personal confirmation. As someone who has obviously been one of the more challenging students, I was curious if she was working. As I made my way toward her I noticed that she was actively reading information from the textbook. When I asked her how things were coming along she stated that she did not feel like she actually understood enough about the Constitution for a quote to help her. This was the first time she had made a remotely positive comment in the course and I was genuinely taken aback. Knowing enough about her I decided to refocus her specifically on an Amendment that she would find fascinating so I directed her toward the 8th. In an effort to focus her, I asked her to define the words cruel and unusual. She was able to do this with ease. Next, I asked her to explain how she would define a punishment as cruel and or unusual? She experienced some difficulty so I provided her with an example of washing the toilets at school as a form of detention. Sarah quickly commented that she would never complete this task and would rather be suspended. The look on her face as she recognized the connection was justification for never losing my cool in my interactions with her.

The experience that I had walking around the classroom during this work period was equally rewarding and enlightening. This fleeting occurrence showcased how digital technology had the power to engage students who were not particularly interested in a specific topic. This student population by and large attempted to complete as many components of the classroom activities as they

possibly could. Today, as they used EDMODO all of the student behavior remained within acceptable expectations. Each student generated meaningful course specific content and the level of activity made it abundantly clear that this assignment provided them with an academic challenge that showcased civic-minded skills in a manner that they had not previously experienced in this course.

There were little conversations occurring beyond the course specific information, but most of the students were positively interacting with one another and the adults in the classroom. Unlike the start of the class period, now the general sense of the learning environment was focused. Teachers cannot have control all of the time, but this was as close to controlled as I had previously achieved with this group. This did not feel like the class that I had become accustomed to teaching. The students worked on each of the three components of the initial assignment for the remainder of the class period. When we returned to the assignment during the subsequent class period the results were the same. My students were engaged in civic-minded social discourse through the completion of United States Civics and Government EDMODO and they actually seemed to enjoy the experience more than previous non-connected activities that we had worked on during prior instructional activities.

What Do You Think

With the success of the initial foray, understanding individual student perspectives about these academic modifications became increasingly important.

Traditionally, institutional change takes place across divergent educational landscapes without much input from the populations whom they most effect. Educational policy trickles down from the top in a manner that often does not consult those who it is designed to benefit. During this action research study, I ensured that each student had an opportunity to become a vocal stakeholder who was aggressively consulted in an effort to gain a significant understanding of the role that the related instructional changes held in their ability to complete the connected learning activities. First, I ensured that I promoted open lines of communication amongst my students through the completion of informal teacher student interviews. These informal interviews occurred in the form of student teacher conferences. In these conferences, I was able to ask the students to detail their opinions about the use of EDMODO in an effort to gauge what they actually thought about the program, how they would change the use of EDMODO, and as a means of gaining worthy feedback. For the sake of this action research study, I decided to highlight two conversations in an effort to provide deeper insight into the inner workings of these discussions and as a means of showcasing the value of such interactions as a method of promoting professional classroom reflection.

Post #1

"The government should make laws and establish a system of courts that is fair to all" (p.88). This quote means that the United States should have laws that the everyone in the nation is responsible for creating and that all of those laws should establish rules for everyone in a fair and equal way. This quote stood out because I sometimes wonder if laws are actually fair and equal for everyone.

Figure 16. Alice's Initial EDMODO Post.

From the start of my conversation with Alice it was clear that she was overwhelmed by the EDMODO assignment. As we spoke, she stated that the assignment was “difficult to complete” and that the overall tasks were “confusing.” Furthermore, as she discussed her feelings she habitually argued that the entire process did not help her learn more information than previous activities we had worked on before starting to use EDMODO. Alice contended that she would rather have the teacher directly communicate the information that we were learning to the students in the class in the form of a traditional lecture rather than use a social media platform like EDMODO. She was not happy with the assignment.

The California wildfires that have now been going for months shows no sign of stopping. It is also now suspected that a man delibrately sparked the fires is northern California. He is being held on 10 million dollar bail as well and issaid to make his court appearence on Friday. I picked this current event because it shows why we need strong laws to in the United States. Without strong laws crazy things like fires will spread around because noone will be put in jail for starting them.



Figure 17. Alice’s Chapter 3 Current Event Post.

In an effort to have a more constructive discussion, I attempted to validate the type of work that she had already completed using EDMODO. Additionally, I wanted her to simultaneously reflect on how completing the work had encouraged her to understand the role that the content from United States Civics and Government held in the remainder of the course. Once she finished her initial

reaction, I explained that the contributions that she had submitted through EDMODO exceeded the expectations I had set. She was speechless. By and large, the remainder of the conversation with Alice confirmed that she was confused about the purpose of the assignment but that confusion did not prevent her from generating quality posts. Additionally, following our conversation it was clear that she emphasized the level of uncertainty she experienced in an effort to shelter her from the potential of failure. Overall the content that she shared on EDMODO established that she developed a thoughtful connection to the information being studied. She contributed a meaningful quote and attempted to analyze the role that the rule of law holds in contemporary American society. Her initial posting verified that she was capable of connecting the information present within the textbook to a meaningful and relative opinion about the relationship that the content had with her individual life experience and events occurring in the world around her.

Landmar Supreme Court Case - Hazelwood School Dstrict vs. Kuhlemeler

This case is about school newspapers rights. two Hazelood High were writing articles for their school's paper including one where a girl blamed her father for her parents' divorce and another about pregancy. They changes the peoples names but the principle of the school did not allow them to print the articles. The girls sued the school saying that Freedom of Speech was violated.

The SUPreme court said that the principal could prevent the stories from being printed since they were sponsored by the school. They said it might have been unsafe to the subjects of the story because even though their names were changed, that does not mean students won't be ble to find out who they are. [Show Less](#)

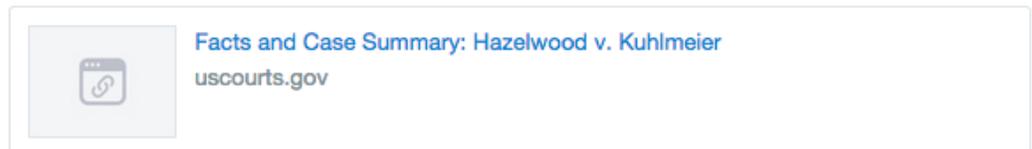


Figure 18. Alice’s Landmark Supreme Court Post.

Our exchange remained positive and I believe that the conversation provided Alice with enough encouragement to showcase the overall purpose of the related educational transformation. Despite the positive feedback and detailed rationalization she continued to argue that the assignment asked too much from each student. She proceeded to tell me that during last year’s course she never had homework and that any class work in social studies usually had the students in groups completing projects making brochures or posters. I found this point to be interesting and I asked why she felt creating a poster would be better than this style of activity. Her response was classic, “It is what we know how to do.” This statement summarized my greatest test instituting a transition like EDMODO. In general, I felt that she exceeded my expectations, she was pleased to hear the positive comments, but would still rather complete instructional activities that

were more comfortable. Her comments showcased that I still have some work to do if I actually wanted her and her peers to completely buy into the assignment.

I was reading about the government set up by the Constitution and I saw this picture. It shows how the government has checks and balances and that each branch has a limited role. Last year our teacher said that that the government was set up to rely on each different group to get things done. I thought that was interesting because I had never really understood that until I saw this picture and it shows that the government is NOT set up to work quickly or easily.

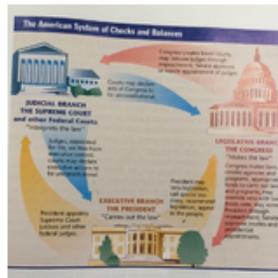


Figure 19. Frank's Initial EDMODO Post.

My discussion with Frank was unlike the meeting I had with Alice. He is an all around different student, an individual who is academically focused rather than socially involved. Although he has some profound learning disabilities, he is exceptionally concerned with his individual course performance, a trait that is somewhat unusual in an applied level course. Frank has a fulltime one-on-one aid due to anxiety issues and the aid mainly helps him stay organized and focused. Typically, Frank is filled with questions. Sometimes these questions are relevant and other times they reveal his anxiousness. This EDMODO experience was no different, questions poured out. Once he had a clear understanding of his personal responsibilities and a sense of direction he appeared to hit the ground running and was able to generate work that was representative of the related expectations.

Since Frank is one of the more academically adept students in the class I usually do not focus on him until he gains my attention. However, he routinely needs positive feedback from adults so he is able to verify that he properly understands the related information as a means of gaining confidence.

Current Event -

This article talks about about how chocolate might actually be good for you to eat. Scientist are doing studies on chocolate to figure out if it is or not. Inside our cells, free radicals damage DNA and cause certain things like cancer, heart disease, or Alzheimer's disease. Chocolate has something in it called antioxidants that might fight against these diseases. I chose this article because I love chocolate and I think I'm a chocoholic like my mom and if chocolate is healthy for you then I can have chocolate all the time! Hopefully...

[Show Full Post](#)

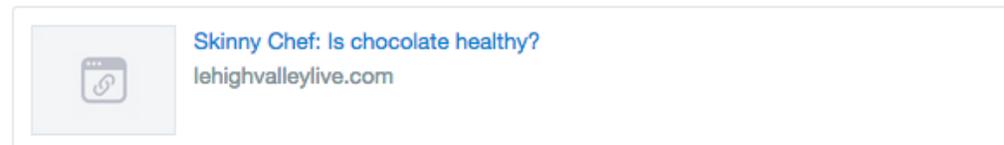


Figure 20. Frank’s Chapter 3 Current Event Post.

The day that Frank and I met to conference our entire conversation took about five minutes. It was one of the shortest during this initial period of conferencing. Unless he has something he feels comfortable or interested about something, Frank is not especially talkative. His approach during our conference was purposeful and to the point with each of his responses arriving in a quick manner. Frank felt that the EDMODO assignment was “fine.” When I asked him to clarify what that meant he said that he did not mind the activity and thought that there were “worst things we could be doing than using EDMODO.” Although this is not specifically what I wanted to hear, I felt that it provided minimal

vindication for the use of the platform in our social studies class. As we talked, I explained to Frank that I felt his contributions were representative of a superior effort and thought. Additionally, I explained that he provided a series of fantastic examples for his classmates since some of them experienced difficulty completing the assignment. To that Frank simply nodded his head and responded by saying “Thank you.”

Frank has again and again been one of the higher performing students in the class, but I do not think he understands that his academic performance is representative of a higher level than his peers. To Frank, success in social studies comes naturally, he actually enjoys the content, and this course above all others is where he has developed heightened expectations for himself. Our quick conversation ended as I detailed how proud I was of his initial effort and that I expected him to continue to push himself as he completed future EDMODO assignments. Again, he nodded and walked back to his seat. These two conversations were representative of the overall experience I had completing student conferences. Initially, I hoped that they would lead to a transformative experience but they were largely one sided with me generating most of the insights. My students were not used to a teacher asking them questions about their individual learning and the discussions that resulted proved this point. These conferences continued but did not particularly improve much over the life of the study.

Landmark Supreme Court Case - Gideon v. Wainwright

In this case Clarence E. Gideon was put on trial for burglary. He lost since he could not pay for a lawyer and the government did not give him one. He was put in jail for 5 years. He sued Florida asking for his rights. He believed he should not be in jail, and wanted to take his case to a higher level. The Supreme Court ruled for him, making it a law that state courts must provide a defendant with a legal counsel if they could not afford one.



Figure 21. Frank's Landmark Supreme Court Post.

Phase Two

The initial stage of the action research study wrapped and the students completed the course activities that led up to a summative assessment on Chapter 3, The United States Constitution. There was little baseline data on my student's performance on prior summative evaluations but the comprehensive performance on the Chapter 3 Test remained consistent with the universal performance on the previous two summative assessments. The use of EDMODO did not adversely affect the student's performance, but some student's grades did edge upward from the previous two examples. When we started Chapter 4, Rights and Responsibilities, it was again time to return to EDMODO I was anxious to see how the students interacted and communicated now that they understood the system and had developed a sense of comfort for its use.

Guided Reading

Each student will be responsible for creating **ONE** (1) inquiry themed question, content specific quotation, or analysis comment of the related historical themes per section of the assigned chapter. Additionally, you may post a picture, illustration, or info graphic that you believe properly addresses any of the outlined historical themes within the *America: Pathways to the Present Text*. These guided reading posts must symbolize individual analysis on the part of the student completing the post. Examples of quality posts appear below.

Sections 1 – The Bill of Rights

Section 2 – Guaranteeing Other Rights

Section 3 – Citizens Duties and Responsibilities

Figure 22. Guided Reading Assignment, Chapter 4.

At this point, the students had each completed five divergent course specific postings using the EDMODO interface and at least a handful of formative discussion comments that showcased a connection that they could make within the information being shared on the digital networking resource. I felt more comfortable as we entered the second phase of the assignment. The students understood how to interact with one another using EDMODO and they had a clear understanding of the progression that they needed to follow to complete individual academic tasks. The general structure of the activities did not change in the second phase. This was purposely done in an effort to provide the students with a standardized system for the completion of EDMODO interactions. The students still completed an initial inquiry posting using the content from Chapter 4, Rights and Responsibilities and a divergent current event. However, in place of the analysis on a Landmark Supreme Court Case the students had to identify a

basic right they believed to be fundamental to human existence, share it, and draft a written defense as to why they felt so strongly.

Identifying Human Rights

Every student will be tasked with selecting a single human right that they believe is fundamental and they could not live without. To complete this portion of the EDMODO activity the students will need to make ONE inquiry post identifying the human right and providing a brief explanation why they could not imagine life without it. To complete this pose the students will have to outline the following information:

1. **IDENTIFY** a single human right you could not live without.
2. **PARAPHRASE** the why you couldn't live without this human right.
3. **CITE** a link that provided the important information about this human right and why it is important to the rest of us or share an image to represent this human right.

Figure 23. Identifying Human Rights Assignment, Chapter 4.

Introducing the EDMODO responsibilities for Chapter 4 was progressively easier than Chapter 3. The students understood the basic components of the assignment since the majority of the individual roles and processes did not change. There were several questions about the human rights activity, but these questions were simple and required some basic clarification. Keeping the process the same aided the classroom comfort level. Once the students understood their role within this incarnation of our use of EDMODO, work commenced. Again, the students overwhelmingly worked in a diligent and direct manner with a majority of them completing the related activities without an overwhelming amount of teacher direction or additional communication.

As the students worked, I again made my way around the classroom in an effort to observe their interactions on EDMODO and as a means of gaining an appreciation for the universal vibe of the overall learning environment. By and large, the students remained focused as they flipped back and forth from the textbook to the computer and between various historically significant resources on the Internet. During this go around some students elected to use an online textbook functionality whereas others used the traditional bound textbook. This change was more a matter of personal preference and availability of desk space than anything else. As I walked by Sarah's desk I stopped and asked her how she was doing. She replied with a quick "fine." Curious, I pressed her in an effort to dig deeper asking if she would like to continue this style of activity in future chapters. She quickly blurted, "If you are going to force us to do work then I guess this is not terrible since we get to work by ourselves on the computer."

Current Event

Each student will share **AT LEAST ONE** current event article from a source of their choosing with an appropriate inquiry summary attached. The students will share the link, analyze the significant of the content of the current event article, and explain why they choose this article over all other options.

Students will use the first letter of their last name to identify a section of news to draw a current event from.

A through E – The Arts

F through I – Student Choice

J through L – Local

M through P – National

Q through T – International

U through Z – Sports

Figure 24. Current Event Assignment, Chapter 4.

Yet again, I was not particularly thrilled with the way that Sarah was describing her personal experience within the EDMODO learning environment, but I think the level of honesty was important. I did not view the work that the students were completing as independent, but Sarah clearly did and her opinion made me wonder if others shared this perspective. Intrigued, I actively sought the students; perspective: was this an independent atmosphere or a collaborative environment? For the most part, student opinions were mixed. Several students quickly answered “yes” stating that their interactions on EDMODO were being completed independently, while others stated that everyone was working on the same assignment using the same form of technology. Carl responded by saying that he was “talking” about the content more than he had during other assignments using the EDMODO wall and felt that it was a “strange form of group work.” Uncertainty remained. Was the work that the students were completing actually increasing their civics minded connections with one another or was the heightened level of connectivity simply acting as a novelty that replicated a divergent form of formative assessment that followed similar previously completed pathways? The answer to this question remained elusive but I do think the students were not used to the existence of a digital collaborative environment as opposed to a traditional one. The answer to this question remained elusive. Students were still adjusting to the existence of a digital collaborative environment whereas I had assumed the “collaborative” component. This

nontraditional classroom, despite the level of technology integration in the district, was proving to challenge the student in ways I had not foreseen.

Peer Comments

Each student will be responsible for commenting on **AT LEAST TWO (2)** posting from their peers over the course of the chapter. These comments can be focused on an agreement of a peer's content point, a contradictory comment about a peer's content point, and or an additional point of discussion.

Figure 25. Peer Comment Assignment, Chapter 4.

As the final work period for Chapter 4, Rights and Responsibilities came to an end, the majority of the students were carefully finishing their final submissions. Our work using EDMODO would not end with this Chapter, but the content that I would use to complete this action research would. As each student completed his or her final deliberations, I again made my way around the classroom. Today the students seemed much more calm than they had during previous work sessions. Moving from desk to desk, I could not hear any specific complaints about the assignment and each and every student was working to complete the related postings in a genuine student centered approach to learning. Student posts actually started to demonstrate their ability to discuss content on a deeper level. The students had become more comfortable with the interactions that could occur within this interface. They started to ask one another questions, post some entertaining links beyond those that singularly related to the course work, and some generally seemed to appreciate EDMODO as a classroom tool.

During this final workday I started to get the feeling that the students understood how EDMODO helped to build a community of learning around the general content present within our individual study of United States Civics and Government.

I think that the electoral college is necessary because it makes counting votes easy since there isn't as many votes to count. It also gives people in smaller states a chance to participate in the election. If the electoral college wasn't in place, then the candidates would ignore smaller states.



Figure 26. Example of Increased Student Comfort Using EDMODO.

Last Call

During this action research study, I was very interested in learning more about the experience that my students had as they completed the various components that made up the whole EDMODO assignment. Although the activities asked a great deal from each student, I was confident that they would be able to participate in a consequential manner that would actually benefit individual understanding in United States Civics and Government. Although they did not provide a wealth of useable data, I actually looked forward to the personal conversations that this action research study allowed me to have with each student. During the final study-related conferences, I tended to focus heavily on

how the students viewed their personal and professional interactions within the EDMODO interface. Generally, I wanted to gain a more complete understanding of how they felt after completing the gamut of activities related to the use of EDMODO and if they believed these activities aided in their ability to comprehend specific historical themes.

Landmar Supreme Court Case - Hazelwood School Dstrict vs. Kuhlemeler

This case is about school newspapers rights. two Hazelood High were writing articles for their school's paper including one where a girl blamed her father for her parents' divorce and another about pregancy. They changes the peoples names but the principle of the school did not allow them to print the articles. The girls sued the school saying that Freedom of Speech was violated.

The SUpreme court said that the principal could prevent the stories from being printed since they were sponsered by the school. They said it might have been unsafe to the subjects of the story because even though their names were changed, that does not mean students won't be ble to find out who they are. [Show Less](#)

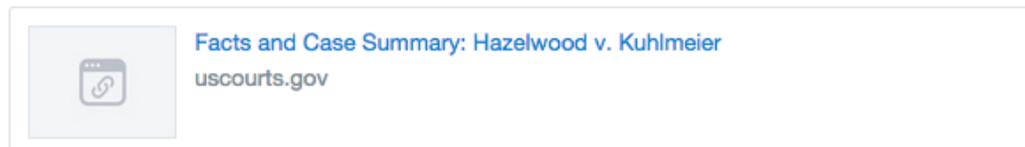


Figure 27. Landmark Supreme Court Case, Example #1.

Sarah had been one of the most vocal critics during the initial incorporation of EDMODO into our United States Civics and Government class. However, as time went on she silenced these critiques and remained above the fray as she completed the related class work without issue. During our second face-to-face discussion about the use of EDMODO she was composed and articulate. When I asked her about her overall experience with EDMODO she

stated, “I think it was ok.” Although this answer was a solid start, I pressed her to explain her opinion with more detail asking her to expand. She stated, “EDMODO was cool cause we did not have to listen to a teacher talk, we just got to work.” Her not so subtle interpretation of the related activates was very meaningful. Through the use of EDMODO the students were empowered to work rather than simply listen. The students were given an opportunity to develop their own unique learning environment that had the ability to suit individual needs in a comprehensive and educational manner. This subtle transformation encouraged a heightened level of student participation within the divergent learning activities. This increased level of student empowerment helped to create a learning environment where the students held a greater role in individual achievement.

Landmark Supreme Court Case - Gideon v. Wainwright

In this case Clarence E. Gideon was put on trial for burglary. He lost since he could not pay for a lawyer and the government did not give him one. He was put in jail for 5 years. He sued Florida asking for his rights. He believed he should not be in jail, and wanted to take his case to a higher level. The Supreme Court ruled for him, making it a law that state courts must provide a defendant with a legal counsel if they could not afford one.



Figure 28. Landmark Supreme Court Case, Example #2.

Sarah went on to explain that she would “not mind using EDMODO in the future” but that she did not think that it should “replace all of the other stuff we do

in class cause it could get boring.” Again, this quote is important since it represents the fact that saturation of any instructional activity can devalue the purpose and role that it plays in ensuring that authentic learning is actually taking place. My conversation with Sarah was positive. Personally, I felt that it was important that I explain to her how proud I was of her dedication and effort throughout the use of EDMODO. She did not seem particularly excited with my praise and nodded her head. Overall, Sarah and I came to understand one another during this action research study. She wanted to work on her own and feel like she had a stake in the activities she was participating. EDMODO provided that.

In *New Jersey v. T.L.O.* a teacher found two high school girls smoking pot in a bathroom. One girl confessed to smoking, but the other did not. The principal searched her purse and found evidence that she was selling pot. She later admitted to selling drugs in the high school. However, in court she said that her 4th Amendment rights against unreasonable searches was broken. Eventually the Supreme Court sided with the school saying that that it met the standards for a search. The Supreme Court's reasoning was that the school did not need a warrant to search the purse because...

[Show Full Post](#)

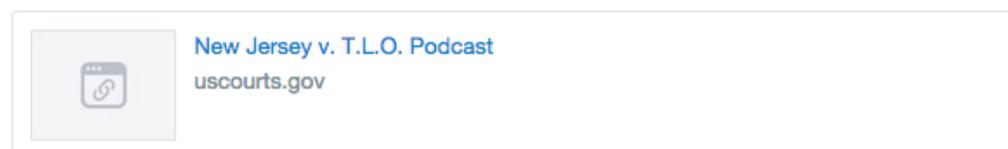


Figure 29. Landmark Supreme Court Case, Example #3.

Jeff was another student who challenged many of the components related to the use of EDMODO in United States Civics and Government. Unlike Sarah, Jeff really never came around to support the use of EDMODO in our classroom. Despite his negative feelings, Jeff did complete all components of the related

assignments and his work was reflective of a precise level of inquiry and thought. As a result, I felt that it was important to gain an understanding about his disapproval of EDMODO and see if it would provide any insight into the overall use of this platform in future learning environments. During our conversation Jeff explained that he simply thought EDMODO was “corny” and using it in school made our work seem “childish.” Furthermore, Jeff went on to explain that he felt that EDMODO did not help him understand the information related to the Constitution or the rights that we all have as citizens of the United States. He stated, “he did what he had to do to earn a grade and that was it.” His perspective was important since it represented one of the few dissenting opinions of the use of EDMODO in our classroom. Although his opinions seem frivolous they represent a perspective that must be heard with respect to the overall ability to operate within this program of study. Most students who feel like Jeff would not have completed the related activities and therefore the use of EDMODO would have adversely affected grades. In the future, I must work to ensure that the activities remain professional and that the purpose is more obvious.

And the Survey Says

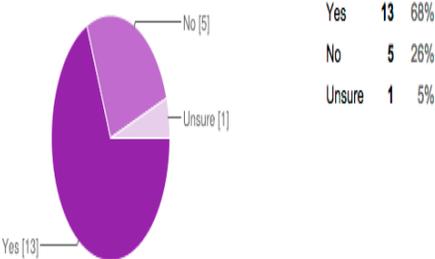
If used properly, surveys have the power to become vital educational tools. As teachers work to develop transformative learning environments they need to examine pertinent student populations in an attempt to create meaningful educational activities that assist in the growth of teaching and learning. However

without the use of tools like surveys, educational professionals might develop academic transformations that are not properly designed to meet the needs of the individuals who exist in specific learning environments. Consequently, surveyors must recognize the pros and cons of using surveys to guide teaching and learning while understanding that the results are not singularly representative of the entire academic story being told. Throughout the related action research process, I came to appreciate my student's opinions more than I had previously. By engaging in conversations, attempting to understand individual concerns, and working to provide the most meaningful outlets for them to share opinions I worked to cultivate a learning environment where the students' thoughts were valued.

Previously, I showcased how the pre-study surveys provided validation in seeking a technology rich transformation within our day-to-day learning environment. The results of the pre-study survey allowed me to understand who my students truly were and what actually mattered to them. The initial survey confirmed some of my predispositions about the role that technology held in my students day-to-day interactions while concurrently defining that not all of my students actually enjoyed the extensive incorporation of technology into their daily instructional activities. This opportunity for professional discovery encouraged me to put my predisposed understanding of these individuals aside an attempt to gain a divergent appreciation of them. Without information like this, I would have lacked a clear understanding of the different student perspectives on

the use of technology and made assumptions that did not in fact hold true about my student’s daily technological interactions. The results from the initial survey guided the initial action research study while also ensuring that I was working to generate a change that was best for everyone.

Though EDMODO I was able to develop an understanding of the relationship that the content being studied had with the events happening in the world today.



Using EDMODO encouraged me to read more content from the Chapter than I have during previous history courses.

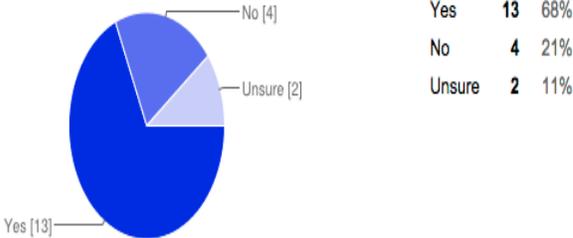
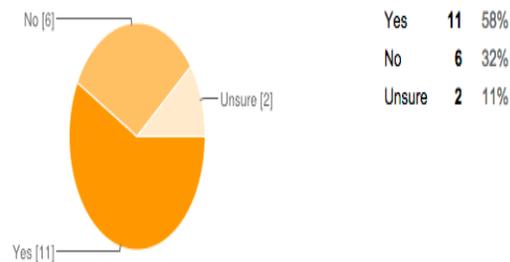


Figure 30. Post-Study Survey Example #1.

Like the pre-study survey, the post-study survey showcased some truly powerful findings. Over the course of the action research study we all experienced some dynamic highs and lows. Yet, I often experienced a difficult time gaining a clear and comprehensive understanding of my student’s individual feelings toward the related EDMODO interactions and activities. As a result, it became

obvious that the only way to properly judge the perspective of each student was to use various forms of information gathering. Through observations, personal discussions, and surveys I was able to gain a more complete understanding of the overall results that occurred within the related action taking place. Completing the actual post-study survey was simple. The students quickly logged onto Google Classroom clicked the related link and got to work. This time was different. The students did not complain about the amount of questions and they asked to start without clarification. Many of the questions were straightforward and therefore I allowed them to start on their own and would provide support as needed.

Using EDMODO to complete class discussion made me feel more comfortable with the information being studied in Social Studies class.



I felt that EDMODO gave me a platform to ask questions and have them be answered.

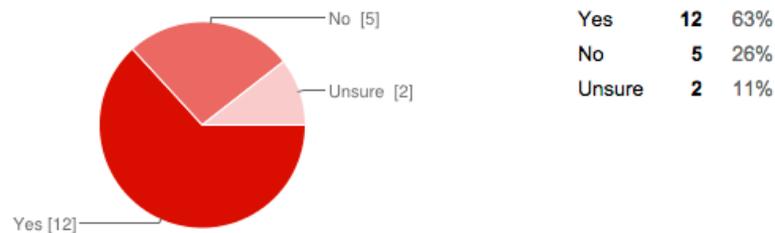
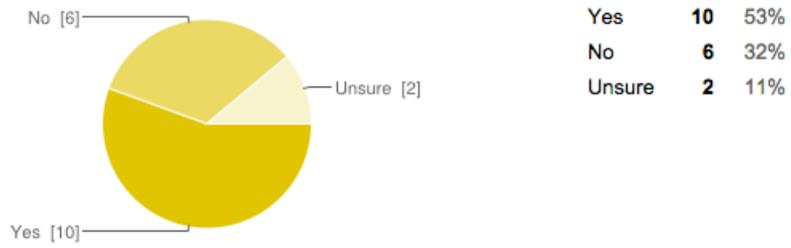


Figure 31. Post-Study Survey Example #2.

The results of the post-study survey demonstrated that a majority of the students felt that the use of EDMODO aided in the development of a relationship between the content that we studied and events occurring around them. This was likely a result of the use of current event analysis and the subsequent student discussions. Through these assignments the students were able to generate an increased connection to the information traditionally studied in United States Civics and Government since the connections expanded beyond the content present in the textbook. This was important due to the fact that the use of EDMODO was designed specifically as a means of encouraging a heightened level of civic-minded understanding amongst the students. Additionally, a majority of students reported that they completed an increased amount of content specific reading since the start of our use of EDMODO. Getting students to read historical nonfiction like a textbook is difficult. Yet, the activities in EDMODO were designed to encourage brief reading forays using historical content that provided them with enough necessary information to develop informed positions. Moreover, a majority of students reported that EDMODO provided them with a heightened confidence to participate in historical discussion and ask questions. Being able to talk securely on EDMODO often eliminated the fear of face-to-face interactions. Student participation is often hit or miss. Using EDMODO made participation obligatory and therefore showcased student opinion while it provided a resource where individuals could ask questions and have them directly

answered by peers and or adult stakeholders. By making these communications easier, individuals were more likely to take advantage and use the tools that they were given. This development is consequential since it showcased that using EDMODO empowered certain students to gain an understanding of their own academic strengths and provided a learning environment where they felt that questions could be asked, content could be addressed, and a level of comfort could be established that did not previously exist. Although our use of EDMODO in United States Civics and Government was often challenging, the majority of the students reported that using it as a component of their individual instructional practice benefited individual teaching and learning. Although some students expressed negative sentiments about their experience with EDMODO, the survey was not designed in a manner that allowed them to showcase these opinions in an advanced manner. This was an absolute limitation of the related survey. There should have been a component where the students were able to provide a more complex explanation of the information that bothered them or explain areas that they wanted to change.

I understand the basic expectations that I have as I interact with EDMODO.



Would you like the instructor to post course specific documents on EDMODO?

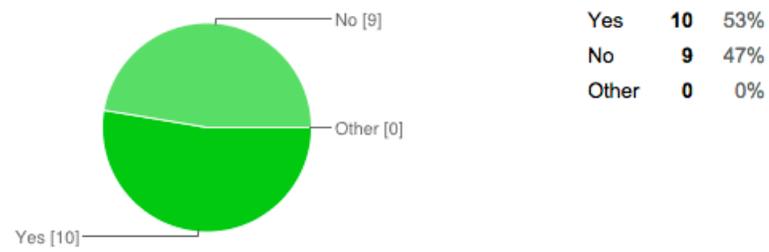


Figure 32. Post Study Survey Example #3

Data Analysis

Introduction

Implementing a teacher led action research study is only as constructive as the examination of the related data. This research study held a significant role in the day-to-day instructional activities of my 9th Grade Applied United States Civics and Government Course. At the conclusion of the related action research, I had a significant quantity of related research information and consequential data. In order to truly understand the purpose of the related action, I needed to classify the records in a manner that supported a developed appreciation of the totality of the related information. I organized the data in the following categories: field logs, student surveys, and student work. Subsequently, this data was analyzed in an effort to gain a more meaningful understanding of student learning, individual motivation, and the overall experience that my students had as we completed our related instructional activities using EDMODO for this action research study.

Field Log

During each class period I documented a series of notes in an effort to highlight observations that occurred during specific instructional activities and student interactions. At the conclusion of each block, I transferred the documented information into a double entry field log that had been created for this specific purpose. As I completed this transfer of information, I added additional content as a way to highlight my personal reactions, reflections, and

any additional related responses that would provide meaningful feedback concerning instructional or interpersonal interactions I witnessed. Since the observations happened quickly and the content that I gathered was so vast, I decided to use the double entry notes as a means of separating the opinion from content that remained strictly observational.

Student Surveys

Prior to the introduction of the primary components of this action research study, I surveyed my students in an effort to gain an enhanced perspective about their use of technology (during school and in their personal time), stance on educational value related to social media (placing a specific emphasis on microblogging), and the level of confidence that each student had when participating in civic or historical discussions in a social studies class. Through the completion of these pre-study surveys, I discovered that most of the students readily used social media and that technology had become a part of the majority of my student's day-to-day interactions. However, some respondents felt we placed too great an emphasis on the use of technology in their academic interactions whereas others were open to a greater role. Additionally, the survey results identified that some individuals were not as comfortable incorporating the use of social media in school whereas a majority of the students felt there could be some educational applications for its use. Generally, all of the students reported that they did not enjoy history specific readings while many stated that

they felt this inability to read in history contributed to poor grades in previous history courses.

At the conclusion of my study, the students completed another survey. This post-study survey presented more specific questions about the role that EDMODO played in individual learning throughout the action research study period. This survey was completed in an effort to gain a more inclusive understanding of individual opinions, preferred instructional approaches, and the overall progress that each student felt he or she had made during our foray using EDMODO. Similar to the pre-study survey, the majority of the students expressed that they benefited from the use of EDMODO. Many of the students cited that EDMODO aided in their individual understanding of specific content present within our individual study of United States Civics and Government. However, some students believed that the use of EDMOD did not help in the development of a more advanced understanding of related historical themes. Many of the students expressed frustration with the intensity or quantity of work that this activity expected of them. This was one of the few responses that were almost universal. For the most part, most of students explained that they looked forward to using EDMODO in future activities and felt that it added in the overall learning occurring in our classroom. The students were split in expanding the role that EDMODO held within our learning environment. Roughly fifty percent cited that

they would like EDMODO to play a greater role in our day-to-day interactions whereas the other half did not.

Prior to the completion of the study, I was interested to discover the connections that the students made between the content we studied and an understanding of events happening around them. I was happy to see that using EDMODO as a means of incorporating our study of United States Civics and Government encouraged the students to think more about what was happening across the United States and abroad. Many of the students explained that they enjoyed using EDMODO as a resource to discover and analyze current events.

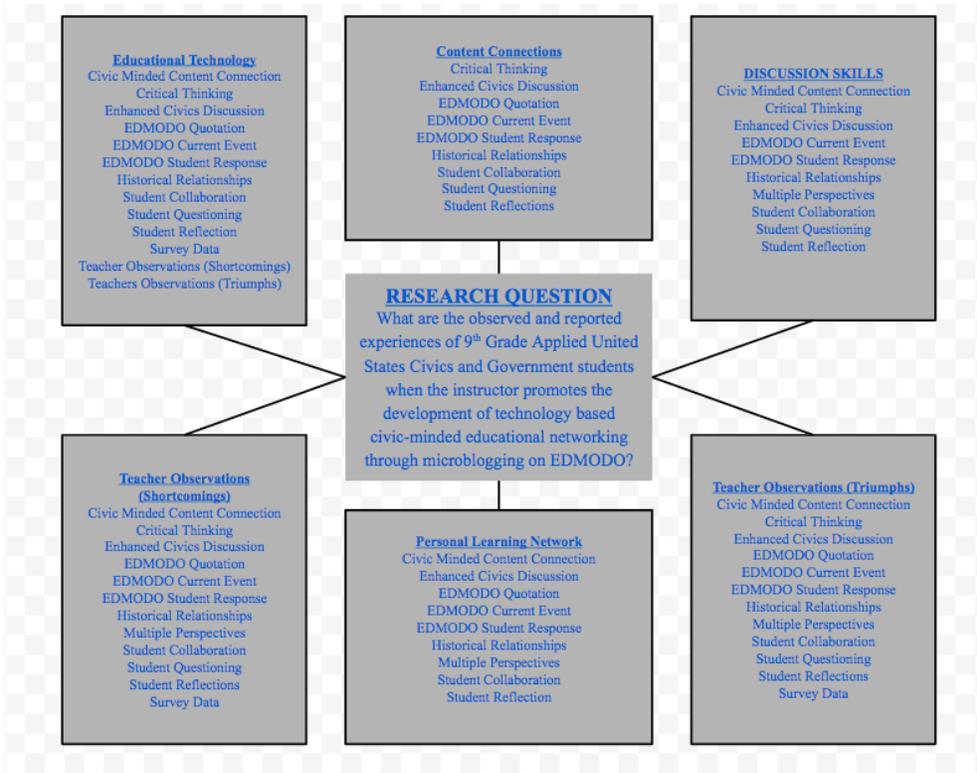
Concurrently, the majority of the students explained that they were reading more as a result of our use of the social networking interface. The students explained that using EDMODO and the design of the activities forced them to complete reading activities that they normally would not have had to participate in. Although this was not a specific intention of the initial incorporation of EDMODO, it is an important alteration. However, many of the students had expressed a meaningful amount of frustration with the style of activity as they explained they felt overwhelmed with all of the different actions and the timelines related to the expectations for completion.

Student Work

Student work is a vital component of any action research study. Throughout my study, I collected and cataloged a diverse amount of work using

the secure educational social networking tool EDMODO. Through my individual participation on EDMODO, I analyzed the work that students submitted in an effort to determine critical thinking, content connections, collaboration, writing standards, and timeliness. A rubric was designed to provide my students with an understanding of how individual submissions would be graded. Overall, the work that each student completed using EDMODO was representative of a specific instructional process and provided insights into the effort that each individual put forth as they completed the related assignments in United States Civics and Government.

Bins and Themes



Research Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to analyze the experience of applied level high school students when the instructor promoted the development of civic-minded educational networking through the use of EDMODO. At the onset of this study, I believed that the use of educational social media would boost student participation and provide each individual with an opportunity to develop individualized understanding of historical themes in the study of United States Civics and Government. Although the final data does support that hypothesis, our experiences throughout this study represent more intricate and complex educational outcomes. During the study, the interpersonal dynamics between the students and teacher changed. Having little contact with the study group prior to the establishment of the related study protocol made for a difficult instructional transition. Additionally, the adoption of EDMODO required the development of specific skills and each component was continually tailored to meet the needs of a diverse group of overwhelmingly special education students.

In the end, the study proved to be demanding. The students finished the various components of the study as more confident learners and the digital instructional strategies were almost universally viewed as useful learning aids. Specific trends emerged from the requisite data to inform my experience as an action researcher, educator, and as an individual who is genuinely interested in

becoming a better teacher. These trends are reprehensive of the function of the action research study.

Educational Technology

The modern learning environment is different than those that existed just a short time ago. Through the implementation of Bring Your Own Device Policies (BYOD) and One-To-One (1:1) computing initiatives, the modern American school student is increasingly learning through the use of a connected device that enables advanced access to traditional and non-traditional types of information. Across the nation some educational professionals are attempting to stymie this revolution. Elsewhere progressive teachers recognize that the connected classroom empowers rather than inhibits student learning. Today, the connected teacher must work to develop instructional strategies that embrace these changes as they transform classrooms into blended learning environments.

Using EDMODO in my United States Civics and Government course encouraged the creation of an adaptive learning environment that brought about a unique blended learning experience in my Applied 9th Grade United States Civics and Government course. EDMODO provided the framework that individual student inquiry and analysis occurred within. Students quickly established a familiarity within the EDMODO structure and promptly worked toward an individualized study of United States Civics and Government. Educational technology cannot replace quality teaching. However, increasing individual

access to complex historical content through the use of synchronous and asynchronous online learning empowered the student population to transform into active and engaged learners who aggressively sought answers rather than remain as individuals who simply waited for the delivery of information in a traditional teacher centered model.

This study confirmed that students of all learning abilities could manipulate divergent forms of educational technology while also meeting the specially designed needs of a diverse group of special education learners. Occurring in a classroom where the majority of the students were identified as individuals who needed special education services did not inhibit instruction. Using EDMODO empowered this classroom of digital natives to take an active role in individual learning through the manipulation of various technologies. These students used prior experience with technology and summarily integrated those experiences into current educational processes as they researched various related historical themes. The use of EDMODO provided the students with a blended learning situation that literally adapted to the individual needs of each student. Fundamentally, the content that the students learned throughout our experience with EDMODO was no different than information those who took this course countless times before. However, the methods that we used within the EDMODO platform relied on the student's abilities to implement technology as a foundation for the creation of divergent styles of inclusive learning.

Content Connections

Ensuring individual interest in the study of history, civics, or the inner workings of governments can be tricky. Normally, students feel connected to content that they feel matters in inner workings of their daily life, provides them insights that they can actually use, or challenges them in a manner they had not previously experienced. Teaching United States Civics and Government to fourteen and fifteen year olds presents a series of problems. Typically, discussing the inner workings of our system of government could have the potential to bore even the most politically charged adults. Contemporary United States Government teachers must focus instructional strategies toward the development of blended learning strategies in an effort to generate content connections that engage students who are typically less than interested in this content area.

The addition of current event analysis within our use of EDMODO empowered my students to reflect on the content being studied alongside current happening in and around our own community, nation, and the globe. Rather than focus the course around hypothetical events or issues, the students were tasked with relating information we discussed to topical current events, reporting about them, and discussing the relevance with peers in a secure personal learning network on EDMODO. The incorporation of both synchronous and asynchronous forms of communication promoted meaningful discussions on the role that these events held in our day-to-day existence, the value of having an informed citizenry,

and encouraged straightforward academic conversations that all students in an applied level course could actively participate in.

Having the students connect with one another alongside diverse content using EDMODO demonstrated the initial steps that they needed to take as they worked to create meaningful personal learning networks. Through the development of these comprehensive discussions, the students gained a real world understanding of the purpose of lifelong learning as it related to an enhanced understanding of the inner workings of the world around them. EDMODO afforded a differentiated learning environment where each student had the freedom to acquire, analyze, and showcase a wide array of relevant historical content in a manner that suited individual interests moderated by supportive and helpful community of teachers and academic aids.

Discussion Skills

Students can demonstrate knowledge and understanding in a multitude of dynamic fashions. Often, in a social studies setting students are able to participate in comprehensive content specific discussions where they have a unique ability to showcase a meaningful understanding of related historical themes through an individual application of dynamic information in relation to specific topics. Through the use of EDMODO, my students were able to participate in a learning environment that combined the use of face-to-face and digital deliberations. The presence of both synchronous and asynchronous forms of civic-minded discussion

enabled the development of communications that extended beyond the limits of the traditional school day and encouraged even the least likely participants to showcase shrewd academic abilities.

For the most part, many of the related instructional activities that occurred on EDMODO interfaced happened in a calculated synchronous manner. The students simultaneously logged into the interface, completed the related content responsibilities, and interacted with one another through the various communication tools available on EDMODO. Since we initially completed these activities during our regularly scheduled class periods, the students were simultaneously interacting with one another through the use of a connected digital communication tool. The use of synchronous forms of discussion promoted daily involvement in routine instructional activities while also providing a certain degree of individual student control that they would not experience in a traditional teacher driven model. The final product manifested in the form of real-time communication that yielded productive civic-minded discussions.

On the other hand, certain components within the EDMODO activity occurred in an asynchronous manner. Typically, asynchronous discussions occurred during a time that was more convenient for individual students to complete assignments outside of the restraints of specific class periods. Generally, asynchronous components of our assignment allowed individuals to complete individual work or engage in discussions about specific topics in study halls or at

home. In this action research study, EDMODO provided an asynchronous discussion format where my students were able to actively participate in continuous content specific discussions in a manner that was never restricted by traditional classroom limitations. Using asynchronous discussion provided enhanced opportunities where students could dynamically share individual work, engage in reflective discussion in a collaborative learning community, and the life of specific discussions could live on perpetually since it is taking place in a familiar setting via EDMODO.

Personal Learning Network

Modern society consists of an ever-increasing network of personal and professional connections. These associations lead to more advanced opportunities, aid in the development of personal and professional relationships, and showcase the transformations taking place as we continue to seek advanced human relationships. The use of EDMODO in United States Civics and Government introduced my students to the upside of educational networking while encouraging them to work alongside peers in a manner that promoted a positive view on the exchange of content specific knowledge.

Throughout this activity, each student worked to develop an individual resource of information that directly related to their individual understanding of specific civic-minded themes from their individual study of United States Civics and Government. These individual resources were hosted within the EDMODO

interface and perpetually represent individual action within our study of the United States Constitution and our Individual Rights and Responsibilities related to citizenship in this nation. Throughout this action research study, each student worked to create their own digital repository in an effort to showcase individual understanding related to the civic-minded topics that we discussed during our day-to-day interactions in United States Civics and Government. The final development of individual personal learning networks act as secure digital portfolios that each student can access while showcasing meaningful evidence of specific students efforts, discussion tactics, and the overall processes that occurred during individual student learning.

Teacher Observations (Shortcomings)

Although this project yielded a number of meaningful professional realizations it also was inhibited by several particular shortcomings. Some of these failings were institutional while others were a result of the study design that I implemented. In the end, no study is perfect. Understanding the limitations of this action research study is essential in gaining a complete view of the role that it played in the development of myself as a professional and how it can shape my teaching practices moving forward.

First, the turmoil that my professional transition caused prior to the start of the study led to some classroom management issues that might have inhibited initial components of the related action research. Arriving over thirty days late to

my research group allowed them to settle into classroom norms that required remediation and subsequently might have prevented the development of more meaningful teacher/student relationships. At the conclusion of the study, I felt as if I was about to experience a breakthrough with several of the more challenging personalities and an enhanced relationship with certain students might have yielded more intense study outcomes.

Next, I wish I had incorporated some additional systemic changes within the overall EDMODO assignment. Initially, class tracking and the fact that my students were labeled as “applied” effected my instructional planning. I wanted to provide my students with an academic challenge but not burn them out. In the end, the students were more than capable of completing the related components of assigned activities. Although they expressed a conflicting opinion, only one student failed to complete a single component of the assignment. Generally, the submissions demonstrated satisfactory participation and I have a lingering feeling that I could have provided a greater academic challenge to my students had I not let the applied label influence the design of the related activities.

Finally, I believe that the overall use of technology could have focused on incorporating additional forms of instructional technology. Initially, I was fearful that my students would experience a learning curve that would be too great to overcome if I introduced multiple different types of educational technology that would supplement our learning. However, the students were able to pick up the

related components of EDMODO without a need for significant instructor interaction. The ease of this experience foreshadowed that the students truly did have a greater understanding of the inner workings of divergent technology processes than I previously understood.

Teacher Observations (Triumphs)

In the end, I am pleased with the totality of this action research study. Part of teaching is the development of an understanding that everything will not always go as planned. This action research study showcased both the dramatic highs and frustrating lows of the profession. However, as with most occupations, educational professionals must gain a certain level of professional satisfaction with instructional experiences where the successes outweigh the failures.

Encouraging my students to accept the incorporation of EDMODO in our day-to-day academic interactions was a success. At first each student seemingly possessed some form of doubt during the initial foray into this connected learning experience. As time passed and the students became more comfortable they generally seemed to enjoy the connected learning activities that we completed through EDMODO. Since the incorporation of EDMODO in our instructional activities we have made its use a routine platform for the identification, analysis, and discussion of current events in United States Civics and Government. Using EDMODO in this manner empowered my students to explore the Internet for content connections that proved beneficial for each student and provide an escape

from the normal activities we complete during our study of United States Civics and Government.

Blended learning is the future of American public education.

Experimenting with divergent forms of blended learning allowed me to gain a greater understanding of the role that it will play in my personal instructional practice throughout my career. Completing this action research study forced me to experiment and push myself in a manner that was supported by an entire community of comprehensive academics. Without my participation in this related action research study, I might not have pushed myself to gain a more complete understanding of the broad uses of educational technology. Additionally, this action research study pushed me to be daring enough to incorporate strategies that I had not previously used in my classroom. In the end, this action research study was a success because it aided in the establishment of a more engaged student population and instructor.

Next Steps

Completing an action research study taught me a great deal about my profession and about myself. My findings confirmed that there is definitive value in the related implementation of divergent forms of instructional technology in the modern American classroom. My students' positive reactions to the manipulation of content specific social networking through the use of EDMODO designated that the experience of transitioning from an analog to a digital learning environment was beneficial. This viewpoint was supported by their participation in the related activities, in student interviews, and from the data gathered in surveys.

Above all else, completing requisite action research demonstrated that comprehensive professional reflection could play an important function in the daily routine of an American educational professional. As a result of this experience, I will continue to incorporate reflection into my daily teaching practices as I continue to include inquiry and analysis in my day-to-day instructional practices. Although I will likely never complete a study of this magnitude again, I did value the role this study held in my professional practice. The skills I learned completing this study would empower educational decisions I make for the remainder of my career.

For the remainder of my personal and professional life I hope to continue to develop an understanding of the function that new forms of technology can

hold in my day-to-day interactions. Using educational technology as the focus of this action research study was not done by chance and participating within the EDMODO learning environment only made me appreciate its growing role in cross curricular forms of study. Using EDMODO alongside my students allowed me to rethink the position that I have as a teacher in the increasingly connected learning environment. Throughout this process, I was continually reminded of the increasing manner that technology plays as it shapes daily human interactions. No matter your personal opinion, transformations related to new forms of technology are here to stay. Personally, I feel the need to embrace the function that it holds in our professional practice and work to become the most relevant, up to date, and savvy educator I possibly can.

Finally, completing this research study inspired me to continue my individual research efforts and data collection beyond the conclusion of this study. I am hopeful that I can inspire other educators to experiment with the benefits of action research as they attempt to develop a more meaningful understanding of their professional practice and how to better meet the educational needs of their students.

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Appendix A

Dear Mr. Ruhf,

The HSIRB has accepted your proposal, "Civic Engagement, Historical Dialogue, and the Development of Personal Learning Networks Through Microblogging on EDMODO." A copy of your proposal will remain with the HSIRB Chair for the duration of the time of your study and for a minimum of one year from the approval date indicated by the date of this email.

Please note that if you change any aspects of your research from the description provided in your proposal, you must receive approval from the HSIRB for those changes prior to implementing them. A request for an extension of your research dates or to make changes to your research proposal can be submitted to the HSIRB using the same form (check renewal or request for modification on the cover page) and email address as you used for your original proposal.

The only thing left is to collect your electronic signature and that of your faculty advisor. Your approval is not complete without these. Please respond to this email with your name and project title in the subject line. Your faculty advisor, Dr. Shosh, can provide his/her electronic signature by replying to this email with his/her name in the subject line. Your replies will serve as your signatures.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you for your patience through this process, and good luck with your research!

Sincerely,
Sarah Johnson

Dr. Sarah K. Johnson
Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board
Moravian College
hsirb@moravian.edu
skjohnson@moravian.edu
610-625-7013

Appendix B

September 3, 2014

Dear Mrs. Siegfried,

I am currently working towards earning my Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. As part of the program, Moravian requires that I conduct a systematic study of my teaching practices. As a result, from October to approximately the end of December I will be conducting a teacher action research study where I intend to examine the observed and reported experiences of students when I implement course specific microblogging activities into my 9th grade American Civics and Government course.

The focus of my teacher action research is to increase course specific student dialogue and civic engagement while promoting the development of independent personal learning networks through the use of microblogging. I plan to do this by creating a technologically rich learning environment focused on course specific discussion occurring beyond the traditional school day. This instructional practice will push my students to inquire, reflect, and assess relevant information using the educational features inherently present within EDMODO. This transformation will empower my students to think about the content in an opposing way while providing a deeper understanding of their role as digital citizens.

I will be gathering data to support my study through the collection of student work related to the microblogging activities, surveys, interviews, and teacher observations. While all the students will be engaged in the study as part of the Applied Civics and Government curriculum, I will only use information collected from the students who have permission to participate in the study. All students' names will be kept confidential, as will teachers and school names. Any work that reveals a student's identity will be altered for their protection. I am asking for your permission to use the data gathered pertaining to a student's involvement however; participation in the study is voluntary and will not affect the student's grade in any way. A student may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, and all information pertaining to that child will not be included in my study.

If you have any questions regarding my action research study, please feel free to contact me. My faculty sponsor at Moravian College is Dr. Joseph Shosh. He can be reached at Moravian at 610-861-1482 or by email at jshosh@moravian.edu.

Please sign and date the form to give your consent to move forward with this study. I would appreciate if the form was returned at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your cooperation and continued support.

Sincerely,

Thomas Ruhf
Gifted Coordinator
Social Studies Teacher
Southern Lehigh High School
ruhft@slsd.org

Appendix C

Dear Parents/Guardians:

I am currently working towards earning my Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. As part of the program, Moravian requires that I conduct a systematic study of my teaching practices. As a result, from the start of September to approximately the end of December I will be conducting a teacher action research study where I intend to examine the observed and reported experiences of students when I implement various course specific microblogging activities into my 9th grade Applied Civics and Government course.

The focus of my teacher action research is to increase course specific student dialogue and civic engagement while promoting the development of independent personal learning networks through the use of microblogging. I intend to do this by creating a technologically rich learning environment focused on course specific discussion occurring beyond the traditional school day. This instructional practice will push my students to inquire, reflect, and assess relevant information using the educational features inherently present within microblogging platforms. This transformation will empower my students to think about the content in an opposing way while providing a deeper understanding of their role as digital citizens.

I will be gathering data to support my study through the collection of student work related to the microblogging activities, surveys, interviews, and teacher observations. While all the students will be engaged in the study as part of the American Cultures curriculum, I will only use information collected from the students who have permission to participate in the study. All students' names will be kept confidential, as will teachers and school names. Any work that reveals a student's identity will be altered for their protection. I am asking for your permission to use the data gathered pertaining to a student's involvement however; participation in the study is voluntary and will not affect the student's grade in any way. A student may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, and all information pertaining to that child will not be included in my study.

If you have any questions regarding my action research study, please feel free to contact me. The principal has approved this study and is also available for questions. My faculty sponsor at Moravian College is Dr. Joseph Shosh. He can be reached at Moravian at 610-861-1482 or by email at jshosh@moravian.edu.

Please check the appropriate response below, then sign and date the form. I would appreciate if the form was returned at your earliest convenience. Thank you very much for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Thomas Ruhf
Gifted Coordinator
Social Studies Teacher
Southern Lehigh High School
ruhft@slsd.org

Please detach and return to Mr. Ruhf

I attest that I am the subject's legally authorized guardian (representative), that I read and understand this consent form, and that I received a copy.

_____ I am willing to have my child participate in this research study.

_____ I am not willing to have my child participate in this research study.

Parent / Guardian Signature: _____

Child Name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D

Name: _____

Civics and Government - EDMODO Activity

In an effort to transform the current learning experience that the students in Applied Civics and Government practice with respect to the assigned course specific reading, the students will work to engage in content specific discussion using the EDMODO social network. EDMODO is an education centric social networking tool that will enhance the experience that the students have as they work to build knowledge through the completion of reading assignments related to American Civics and Government. This instructional alteration will promote the completion of reading assignments, encourage content rich discussion, and allow for enhanced communication between the students and the instructor. This activity will encourage the students to identify key information from the reading in the form questions, quotations, or comments. Each student will be responsible for creating **ONE** (1) inquiry themed question, content specific quotation, or analysis of the content through a comment per section of the assigned chapter. If the assigned chapter has four sections each student is responsible for making four initial postings. Subsequently, each student will then be responsible for commenting on **AT LEAST TWO** posting from their peers over the course of the chapter. These comments can be focused on an agreement of a peer's content point, a contradictory comment about a peer's content point, and an additional point of discussion. Finally, the students will then share **AT LEAST ONE** current event article from a source of their choosing with an appropriate summary attached. The students will share the link and discuss the connection that the article has to the course, their lives, or why it was considered significant. The instructor will provide due date information as per these responsibilities during each subsequent chapter. Depending on the chapter, students will complete additional assignments in an effort to build connections between the content and additional aspects of their lives. Further clarification will follow.

LOGIN INFORMATION / DIRECTIONS

- 1) Go to the following site: <https://edmo.do/j/79wbc4>
- 2) Register using the following group specific login code: fbqn5y
- 3) Start your responsibilities within the EDMODO resource.

Appendix E

Name: _____

EDMODO Current Event

In an effort promote comprehensive civic-minded exchanges you will be responsible for generating a rotating array of biweekly current event posting using the EDMODO microblogging environment. To complete the current event activities the students will need to critique the thesis or main idea of the selected source, compare their individual perspective to that outlined in the source, and attach the resource link that they used. Attached on the reverse side of this document is a list of suggested source materials. You do not have to exclusively use these sources but they will provide a good starting point for student exploration. The topic categories will be based on the first letter of the student's last name with topics rotating every other week.

A through E – Local

F through I – National

J through L – International

M through P – Sports

Q through T – The Arts

U through Z – Student Choice

Current Event Sources

****These sources are only suggested. You are free to use additional sources that you deem fit. ****

The Express Times: www.lehighvalleylive.com

The Morning Call: www.mcall.com

WFMZ: www.wfmz.com

Newsweek: www.newsweek.com

The Week: www.theweek.com

USA Today: www.usatoday.com

TIME: www.time.com

The Washington Post: www.washingtonpost.com

The Wall Street Journal:
www.online.wsj.com/home-page

National Geographic:
www.nationalgeographic.com

Reuters: www.reuters.com

The Associated Press: www.ap.org

Newsela: www.newsela.com

Appendix F

Name: _____

Chapter 3 – The United States Constitution - EDMODO

The following information outlines the methods that we will use EDMODO during Chapter 3, The United States Constitution. If you have any questions please feel free to ask Mr. Ruhf in class, on EDMODO, or via email.

Chapter 3 Guide Reading Notes

All information related to the Chapter 3, The United States Constitution Guided Reading Notes will be posted under the assignment page on the Applied Civics and Government EDMODO site. Make time to read over the notes and use the information outlined in them to reflect on the content that you read within the textbook. We will cover the notes in class but will not spend a significant amount of time copying and or outlining the knowledge from the notes at length. It will be your responsibility to read through and identify any specific questions that you have. If you have questions **SEEK** out Mr. Ruhf through one of the communication methods listed above.

Guided Reading

Each student will be responsible for creating **ONE** (1) inquiry themed question, content specific quotation, or analysis comment of the related historical themes per section of the assigned chapter. Additionally, you may post a picture, illustration, or info graphic that you believe properly addresses any of the outlined historical themes within the Civics and Practice: Principals of Government and Economics. These guided reading posts must symbolize individual analysis on the part of the student completing the post. Examples of quality posts appear below.

Sections 1 – Ideals of the Constitution

Section 2 – The Three Branches of Government

Section 3 – An Enduring Document

EXAMPLES

In Section 3, that the Fugitive Slave Act denied captured slave to the right of trial-by-jury. It is interesting because today that would be illegal, see how it is unconstitutional. (Page 357)

In section 1 I learned that the difference between the North and South is slavery. Many Northerners believed that slavery "violated the basic principles of both the United States and the Christian religion". The North were shocked about what the novel "Uncle Tom's Cabin" had to say about slavery. But the southerners said they were all lies. "While they admitted that some masters did treat enslaved people badly, they argued that few were as cruel as Simon Legree."

Landmark Supreme Court Cases

Every student will randomly be assigned a historically significant Landmark United State Supreme Court Case. To complete this portion of the EDMODO activity you will need to make **ONE** inquiry post about the assigned United States Supreme Court Case. To complete this posting you will need to do the following:

1. **DESCRIBE** the United States Supreme Court Case.
2. **ANALYZE** and **INQUIRE** about the historical significance of the ruling.
3. **CITE** a link that gives information about the person.

Current Event

Each student will share **AT LEAST ONE** current event article from a source of their choosing with an appropriate inquiry summary attached. The students will share the link, analyze the significant of the content of the current event article, and explain why they choose this article over all other options.

Students will use the first letter of their last name to identify a section of news to draw a current event from.

A through E – Student Choice

F through I – Local

J through L – National

M through P – International

Q through T – Sports

U through Z – Arts

Peer Comments

Each student will be responsible for commenting on **AT LEAST TWO (2)** posting from their peers over the course of the chapter. These comments can be focused on an agreement of a peer's content point, a contradictory comment about a peer's content point, and or an additional point of discussion.

Appendix G

Name: _____

Chapter 4 – Rights and Responsibilities - EDMODO

The following information outlines the methods that we will use EDMODO during Chapter 4, Rights and Responsibilities, you have any questions please feel free to ask Mr. Ruhf in class, on EDMODO, or via the class specific Twitter.

Chapter 4 Notes

All information related to the Chapter 4, Rights and Responsibilities Guided Reading Notes will be posted under the assignment page on the Applied Civics and Government EDMODO site. Make time to read over the notes and use the information outlined in them to reflect on the content that you read within the textbook. We will cover the notes in class but will not spend a significant amount of time copying and or outlining the knowledge from the notes at length. It will be your responsibility to read through and identify any specific questions that you have. If you have questions **SEEK** out Mr. Ruhf through one of the communication methods listed above.

Guided Reading

Each student will be responsible for creating **ONE** (1) inquiry themed question, content specific quotation, or analysis comment of the related historical themes per section of the assigned chapter. Additionally, you may post a picture, illustration, or info graphic that you believe properly addresses any of the outlined historical themes within the America: Pathways to the Present Text. These guided reading posts must symbolize individual analysis on the part of the student completing the post. Examples of quality posts appear below.

Sections 1 – The Bill of Rights

Section 2 – Guaranteeing Other Rights

Section 3 – Citizens Duties and Responsibilities

EXAMPLES

In Section 3, that the Fugitive Slave Act denied captured slave to the right of trial-by-jury. It is interesting because today that would be illegal, see how it is unconstitutional. (Page 357)

In section 1 I learned that the difference between the North and South is slavery. Many Northerners believed that slavery "violated the basic principles of both the United States and the Christian religion". The North were shocked about what the novel "Uncle Tom's Cabin" had to say about slavery. But the southerners said they were all lies. "While they admitted that some masters did treat enslaved people badly, they argued that few were as cruel as Simon Legree."

Identifying Human Rights

Every student will be tasked with selecting a single human right that they believe is fundamental and they could not live without. To complete this portion of the EDMODO activity the students will need to make ONE inquiry post identifying the human right and providing a brief explanation why they could not imagine life without it. To complete this pose the students will have to outline the following information:

1. **IDENTIFY** a single human right you could not live without.
2. **PARAPHRASE** the why you couldn't live without this human right.
3. **CITE** a link that provided the important information about this human right and why it is important to the rest of us or share an image to represent this human right.

Current Event

Each student will share **AT LEAST ONE** current event article from a source of their choosing with an appropriate inquiry summary attached. The students will share the link, analyze the significant of the content of the current event article, and explain why they choose this article over all other options.

Students will use the first letter of their last name to identify a section of news to draw a current event from.

- A through E – The Arts
- F through I – Student Choice
- J through L – Local
- M through P – National
- Q through T – International
- U through Z – Sports

Peer Comments

Each student will be responsible for commenting on **AT LEAST TWO (2)** posting from their peers over the course of the chapter. These comments can be focused on an agreement of a peer's content point, a contradictory comment about a peer's content point, and or an additional point of discussion.

Appendix H

Name: _____

Foundations of Government EDMODO Reflection

DIRECTIONS: Complete the following reflection activity by detailing reflective information about the successes, failures, challenges, and benefits that you believe you personally experienced completing the Chapter 2, Foundations of Government EDMODO assignments.

SUCSESSES	
FAILURES	
CHALLENGES	
BENEFITS	

Appendix I

Name: _____

The United States Constitution EDMODO Reflection

DIRECTIONS: Complete the following reflection activity by detailing reflective information about the successes, failures, challenges, and benefits that you believe you personally experienced completing the Chapter 3, The United States Constitution EDMODO assignments.

SUCSESSES	
FAILURES	
CHALLENGES	
BENEFITS	

Appendix J

Name: _____

EDMODO Microblogging Rubric

Critical Thinking _____/ 10	Content Connections _____/ 10	Collaboration _____/ 10	Writing Standards _____/ 10	Timeliness _____/ 10
Posting accurately demonstrate the use of higher order thinking including inquiry, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Post illustrate a thoughtful approach the study of history.	The microblogging responses are reflective of connections to the topic while integrating the information from the class readings. The postings are insightful and apply to concepts being taught in class.	The postings represent quality constructive criticism, questions, and additional information meant to help classmates understand topical historical themes.	The writing from microblogging posts is clear, concise, and easy to understand. The ideas and responses are communicated clearly and coherently.	The responses are submitted on or before the due date.

Total: _____ / 50

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Appendix K

**** Actual baseline survey will be administered using Google Docs ****

Applied Civics and Government – Baseline Survey

SECTION 1: Initially, check the appropriate box that corresponds to each question.

1. I Am:

- Male
- Female

2. Age:

- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16

3. As a technology user I would classify myself as:

- Non-user
- Beginner
- Confident
- Read to Teach My Peers

4. I regularly use a computer / computing device to complete school related tasks:

- Yes
- No
- No Computer Access

5. I rate my access to computer technology at school:

- Inadequate
- Ok
- Adequate
- Superior

6. Which of the following do you most consistently use to access the Internet?

- Desktop Computer
- Laptop Computer
- Tablet Computer
- Smart Phone

7. Which of the following best represents the percentage of free time that I use technology?

- 0% - 20%
- 21% - 40%

41% - 75%
76% - more

8. Do you plan on taking advantage of the school district's newly implemented "bring your own device" policy?

Yes
No
I do not have a device to bring

9. I regularly use the following forms of technology to aid in ACADEMIC success:
(Check all that apply)

Microsoft Office Tools
Apple iWork Apps
Google Apps
Twitter
Facebook
Instagram
EDMODO
Skype
Wikispaces
Pinterest
OpenStudy
Khan Academy
Fun Brain
MangaHigh
Animoto
Socrative
StudySyc
Wordle
Quizlet
YouTube
Ted-ED
Glogster
Google Earth
MasteryConnect
PodCasts
Live Binders
AudioBoo

10. I regularly use the following forms of technology in my FREE time: (Check ALL that apply)

Microsoft Office Tools
Apple iWork Apps
Google Apps
Twitter

Facebook
Instagram
EDMODO
Skype
Wikispaces
Pinterest
OpenStudy
Khan Academy
Fun Brain
MangaHigh
Animoto
Socrative
StudySyc
Wordle
Quizlet
YouTube
Ted-ED
Glogster
Google Earth
MasteryConnect
PodCasts
Live Binders
AudioBoo

SECTION 2: When appropriate, select the number that best describes how you use technology.

- 1 – Not using technology
- 2 – Using technology for this 3-5 times per year
- 3 – Using technology for this monthly
- 4 – Using technology for this weekly

11. Communicate with parent / guardians.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

12. Track completion, progress, and grades for school assignments.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

13. Complete homework, projects, or additional school related study activities.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

14. Conduct online research, investigations, or simply browse the content of the Internet.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

15. Learn and practice technology related skills.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

16. Use technology to identify problems and strategize possible solutions.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

27. Practice skills and or concepts not yet learned.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

18. Independently learn about topics not being covered in school

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

19. Interact with peers using social media tools.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

20. Play education or entertainment games.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

Section 3: Complete the following reflection questions.

21. What is one way that you currently use technology throughout your educational routine that you wish you did not?

22. What is one way that you currently do not use technology during your educational routine that you wish you did?

23. What is the most significant factor preventing you from incorporating more technology into your daily routine?

Appendix L

** Actual baseline survey will be administered using Google Docs **

Applied Civics and Government – Conclusion Survey

SECTION 1: Initially, check the appropriate box that corresponds to each question.

1. I Am:

- Male
- Female

2. Age:

- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16

3. I rate my personal contribution on EDMODO:

- Bare minimum
- Average
- Above Average
- I could not stop participating

4. I rate my access to computer technology at school:

- Inadequate
- Ok
- Adequate
- Superior

5. How often did you talk about content being discussed on EDMODO with your parents, family, or friends?

- Often
- Sometimes
- Not Very Often
- Never

6. Which of the following best describes the level of comfort you had using the resources available to you on EDMODO.

- Very Comfortable
- Mostly Comfortable
- Not Comfortable
- Unsure

7. Though EDMODO I was able to develop an understanding of the relationship that the content being studied had with the events happening in the world today.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

8. Using EDMODO encouraged me to read more content from the Chapter than I have during previous history courses.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

9. Using EDMODO to complete class discussion made me feel more comfortable with the information being studied in American Cultures class.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

10. I felt that EDMODO gave me a platform to ask questions and have them answered.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

11. I understand the basic expectations that I have as I interact with EDMODO.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

12. Would you like the instructor to post course specific document son EDMODO?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

SECTION 2: When appropriate, select the number that best describes your personal educational experience with EDMODO.

- 1 – Not helpful
- 2 – Sometimes helpful
- 3 – Mostly helpful
- 4 – Very helpful

13. Reflect on the content from course specific readings.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

14. Inquire about the significant of historical themes.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

15. Become more comfortable with alternative forms of educational technology.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

16. Use technology to identify problems and strategize possible solutions.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

17. Practice skills or concepts not yet learned.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

18. Utilize alternative outlets for personal inquiry.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

19. Support the development of a collaborative environment.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

20. Explore and learn topics of your own choosing.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

21. Interact with resources and information not traditionally available in school.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

22. Demonstrate achievement in an alternative way.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

Section 3: Complete the following reflection questions.

23. If I could SUBTRACT one thing from the EDMODO activity, it would be?

24. If I could ADD one thing to the EDMODO activity, it would be?