

Melissa Welz

New Jersey City University

EDTC 816 Advanced Building Online Communities

Assessment 3: Design an Online Community

Dr. Laura Zieger

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**“EmpowerED:
Inspiring and Teaching Visual and Performing Arts Educators in the Digital Age”**

Online Community Site : <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1854348665084052>

Background: The development of digital technologies has led to a transformation in education across all disciplines, including the visual and performing arts. In order to enhance student engagement, support collaborative learning, and increase resource accessibility, educators in various professions are increasingly relying on online tools (Kraut & Resnick, 2016). Research has indicated that incorporating digital technologies into arts based courses can improve learning outcomes and teacher/student motivation (Perry, 2016).

Visual and performing arts educators have a wide range of options when it comes to promoting creativity and innovation due to online platforms. Web based tools, for instance, can let students engage in collaborative digital projects, view virtual galleries, and watch artist presentations and performances online (Garner, 2019). Additionally, social media platforms can give students a platform to publish their work, get input from professionals and peers, and create artistic communities outside of the classroom. Moreover, individualized learning experiences that accommodate a range of learning styles and skill levels are made possible by the versatility of various digital tools for teachers and students (Pratt, 2007).

Building on the growing use of digital tools in arts education, many visual and performing arts educators have turned to online communities to connect, collaborate, and share resources. One such example is the Facebook group, "EmpowerED: Inspiring and Teaching Visual and Performing Arts Educators in the Digital Age" which I created in 2024. Recognizing the need for a supportive network beyond individual school walls, I want to leverage the

accessibility and interactivity of social media to establish a vibrant online space for VPA teachers. Through this community, educators can access lesson plans and instructional materials, engage in discussions about effective integration of educational technologies, and draw inspiration from the successes and challenges of their peers. When we develop a sense of belonging and provide a platform for the sharing of best practices, a Facebook group can empower educators to build the motivational power of digital tools and better serve their students.

Design: As an experienced designer, I have approached the task of creating a Facebook group for visual and performing arts educators with a thoughtful and user centric approach to empowerment in the digital age. The primary goal of this online community is to provide a space where educators can share their inspiring and motivating stories, lesson ideas, and resources to support and promote education.

To design this community, I have drawn upon my understanding of online community dynamics, group behavior, and educational technology. I have utilized Facebook for more than fifteen years. I have joined various groups, interacted with over one thousand online friends, and created meaningful and educated posts on my own Facebook platform. Many of the members of my created group are my friends. I have invited my friends who are educators and artists. I will ask them if they can share my created group. By individually inviting people, one must develop relationships to join and participate in the community (Millington, 2012). I have always been an avid member of Facebook. This being said, I have conducted extensive research on existing online communities for educators, analyzed their features and engagement patterns, and identified key insights that inform the design of this new group.

To develop this online community group, I have drawn upon my extensive background in educational technology, online community management, and the scholarship surrounding the role of digital tools and platforms in arts education. I created an analysis of existing online communities for educators, with a particular focus on those catering to visual and performing arts professionals in a spreadsheet. This type of research allows identification of key trends, pain points, and best practices that have informed the design and implementation of an online group (Pratt, 2007). This was how I was able to figure out how my group can stand out amongst the other Facebook groups. My created group will help me collect data from interactions for my upcoming dissertation.

Central to my methodology for my dissertation, I will engage in a mixed methods approach where I will engage with in-depth interviews and focus groups with prospective members to deeply understand their needs, preferences, and aspirations. I will also conduct online surveys in online teaching groups as well for more collection data. By actively collaborating with a target audience, I will be able to craft a community structure, features, and content strategy that directly addresses the unique challenges faced by visual and performing arts educators in the digital landscape.

To promote engagement, the group will feature gamification elements, such as recognition badges for active contributors and a "featured educator of the week" program. These features aim to incentivize participation and develop a sense of community (Maljkovic, 2017). Additionally, the group will integrate collaborative tools, such as shared document editing and brainstorming features, to enable members to co create and refine lesson plans, teaching strategies, and other resources. This encourages a collaborative and supportive environment. Referral growth tactics will include ownership/involvement level ideas that encourage members

to invite their friends. In example, you establish an event/goal that members participate in, increase a sense of ownership and thus invite other people in their social network to join the community (Millington, 2012).

To ensure diverse perspectives are represented, the group will have a moderation team comprising educators from various backgrounds, subject areas, and levels of experience. This diversity among the moderators helps to identify and address potential biases or blind spots in the group's content and discussions. In addition to the resource sharing aspects, the group will also host virtual workshops, webinars, and Q&A sessions with industry experts. These professional development opportunities aim to provide members with ongoing learning and growth opportunities.

Compared to existing online communities for educators, this Facebook group offers a more targeted and specialized experience for visual and performing arts educators. While there are general education focused groups and communities, this group's niche focus allows for a deeper level of engagement and a more tailored set of features and resources with digital tools. Additionally, the group's emphasis on gamification, collaborative tools, and professional development sets it apart from many existing educator communities, which often focus more on passive content-sharing.

Conclusion: The experiences of visual and performing arts educators could be significantly improved and impacted by the incorporation of digital technologies and online communities. These online platforms have the potential to empower teachers to better serve their students, develop a feeling of belonging, and exchange best practices, as demonstrated by the "EmpowerED: Inspiring and Teaching Visual and Performing Arts Educators in the Digital Age" Facebook group. Through the utilization of digital technology' accessibility, interaction, and

variety, arts instructors may encourage creativity, promote collaborative learning, and offer customized learning opportunities.

However, careful preparation and consideration of the particular requirements and preferences of arts educators are necessary for effective implementation of online resources. An engaged and encouraging online community can be developed by implementing user-centric features like gamification, collaborative workspaces, and diverse representation, as demonstrated by the design strategy for the "EmpowerED: Inspiring and Teaching Visual and Performing Arts Educators in the Digital Age" group. More investigation and creativity in the application of digital technology will be essential to maintaining teacher enthusiasm and enhancing student outcomes as the area of arts education develops.

References

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