



# Discussion Boards

In the Classroom



# What are Discussion Boards

Discussion boards, or threaded discussions, are one of the most commonly used tools in online teaching. Discussion forums provide the ability for asynchronous discussion to occur over a period of time. (Edutopia 2010)

“... a means whereby just about anyone can contribute to an ongoing ‘conversation in which knowledge is both discovered and constructed’ (Freedman, 2006, p. 13).”

(Dohn, 2009, p. 345)

# CDS' Vision

Discussion boards meet CDS' shared vision in three particular ways:

1. Students learn most effectively when provided opportunities for exploration, critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving within authentic situations. (from [www.cds.ed.cr](http://www.cds.ed.cr))

# Vision (cont.)

2. Deliberate development of character and attitude is an essential part of our school's culture and curriculum. (from [www.cds.ed.cr](http://www.cds.ed.cr))

3. Positive decision-making enhances emotional, mental, physical and social health and wellbeing. (from [www.cds.ed.cr](http://www.cds.ed.cr))

# Benefits of Discussion Boards

- Builds class community by promoting discussion on course topics (Edutopia 2010)
- Allows time for in-depth reflection- students have more time to reflect, research & compose their thoughts before participating in the discussion (Edutopia 2010)
- Facilitates learning by allowing students to view & to respond to the work of others (Edutopia 2010)

# Benefits (Cont.)

- Develops thinking & writing skills (Edutopia 2010)
- Allows guest experts to participate in the course by posting information & responding to questions (Edutopia 2010)
- CMS can provide a deep learning experience and can be used for multimedia and in–depth communication with students. (Lane 2009)

# Benefits (Cont.)

- ...Allow [students] to participate even if they are too shy to speak in class...allows [students] to give more thoughtful and critical feedback, because they can take time to look up information or carefully craft a statement to be critical but not mean-spirited. (Light, 2011)

# Benefits (Cont.)

- “Web 2.0 is a “participatory platform... a means whereby just about anyone can contribute to an ongoing ‘conversation in which knowledge is both discovered and constructed (Freedman, 2006, p. 13). (Dohn, 2009, p. 345)



# Target Demographic

While discussion boards may be best suited for older students for various reasons, they can also be utilized effectively by elementary students as well.

The target demographic is grades 4-12; although, third graders could easily participate in online discussions, they will most likely need serious monitoring and teaching of best practices.

# Cost

Absolutely Free (with the purchase of Final Site)

# Equipment/Software

Teachers and students will need access to the internet and a login for Final Site.

# Technology Support

Final Site offers a myriad of support options

IT has gone through extensive training on how to use and work with Final Site.

# Limits & Safety

Parent access

Netiquette

Cyber bullying

# Discussion Boards in Use

**Student opinions on content.** After studying a concept, let students talk about it. There's a lot we can learn from this collaboration — what they don't understand, what stimulates them, what we left out of our teaching, etc. It may also encourage some peer teaching, which we know can often be more effective than teacher instruction. (Ditch That Text Book 2012)

# Use (Cont.)

**Hypothesizing.** Take an idea from your curriculum and turn it on its head. How would life be now if the Cuban Missile Crisis hadn't been resolved? What how would the story be different if the main character hadn't died that tragic death? This touches on some of the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. (Ditch That Text Book 2012)

# Use (Cont.)

**Vocabulary practice.** Let students create a story together using new vocabulary — one line at a time, adapting to each other's posts. Post a picture and have students write creative sentences/thoughts about it using vocabulary. Play with language. (Ditch That Text Book 2012)



# Use (Cont.)

**Quiz show.** Have students develop their own questions for each other from material you've been covering. They pose them to each other and answer in the comments section.  
(Ditch That Text Book 2012)

# Use (Cont.)

**Anticipating.** Stop in the middle of a story or chapter and, before proceeding, have students anticipate what is coming next. History, literature and so many other things we examine in school have such strong ties to students' lives. Let them (or help them) make those connections. (Ditch That Text Book 2012)

# Use (Cont.)

**Solving problems.** Students can tackle the problems of the world, big and small through discussion boards. Pose a question relevant to what you're covering and have them present well developed solutions. (Ditch That Text Book 2012)

7.

# Use (Cont.)

**Support.** Offering a discussion board for students to ask questions about homework, a reading or a topic from class discussion opens up a potentially 24-hour help desk. Students can help students, or the teacher can provide help, too. (Ditch That Text Book 2012)

# Effectiveness

“We identified three elements that have clearly shaped how these teachers used Web 2.0 to create sustained, meaningful communication among their students:

- Instituting daily practice
- Carefully considering the audience
- Teaching and enforcing appropriate behavior”

(Light, 2011, p.11)

# Effectiveness (Cont.)

The teachers we interviewed were all working hard to create both an offline and an online community that was supportive and would encourage students to share ideas, take intellectual risks, and give and receive critical yet respectful feedback. Without this type of social community, few of the activities we saw would have been successful. (Light, 2011, p.14)

# Effectiveness (Cont.)

The sense of identity and belonging in an online community has been shown to increase learner persistence and achievement (Hughes, 2009). (Farkas, 2012, p. 85)

# Professional Development

Effective integration of technology is the result of many factors, but the most important factor is the teachers' competence and ability to shape instructional technology activities to meet students' needs." (Gorder, 2008, p. 63)



# Reflection

This process has been very eye opening. Most certainly, technology coaches are compelled to complete presentations like this very one in order to sway their administrators and board. Therefore, I think it safe to say that this experience is incredibly relevant and meaningful to me in the future. While I don't think I will complete a huge presentation for a free technology. I would create something like this to promote a suggested professional development method, or a tool that cost money. In fact, I will be giving a professional development session on discussion boards this week. I will undoubtedly draw from the research I have done, and the organization of this presentation to solidify my pd.

# References

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