

Using Padlet to Foster Robust Student Reflection

Introduction

Reflective learning is often integrated into higher education classrooms to help students build knowledge and develop scaffolding (Ryan & Ryan, 2015). Following the COVID-19 pandemic, students require new educational requirements such as an evolving curriculum, purposeful pedagogy, and delivery of instruction that capitalizes on the strengths of synchronous and asynchronous learning (Zhao & Watterston, 2021). In the post-pandemic world, instructors face the challenge of how to foster reflection and learning in their classrooms in engaging ways. Researchers argue that to develop broad-scale approaches to reflection, instructors must use strategic pedagogic interventions (Ryan & Ryan, 2015; Zhao & Watterston, 2021). One strategic intervention method is integrating technology to change conditions and promote reflection. Facilitating learning via technology has been shown to offer students the opportunity to engage in reflective tasks (Strampel & Oliver, 2007). Additionally, the use of technology has been found to encourage deep learning and higher levels of reflection when compared to face-to-face methods (Strampel & Oliver, 2007). However, Mumforda and Dikilitas (2020) found the digital channel is important to consider as reflection can depend on the individual's attitude and their past experiences. Therefore, tools that offer collaboration and can engage the students who thrive online, such as Padlet (San Francisco, CA), can serve as the solution to the conundrum. Padlet is an online tool that can foster reflection through sharing information with images, audio, or video files on virtual walls (Deni, 2018).

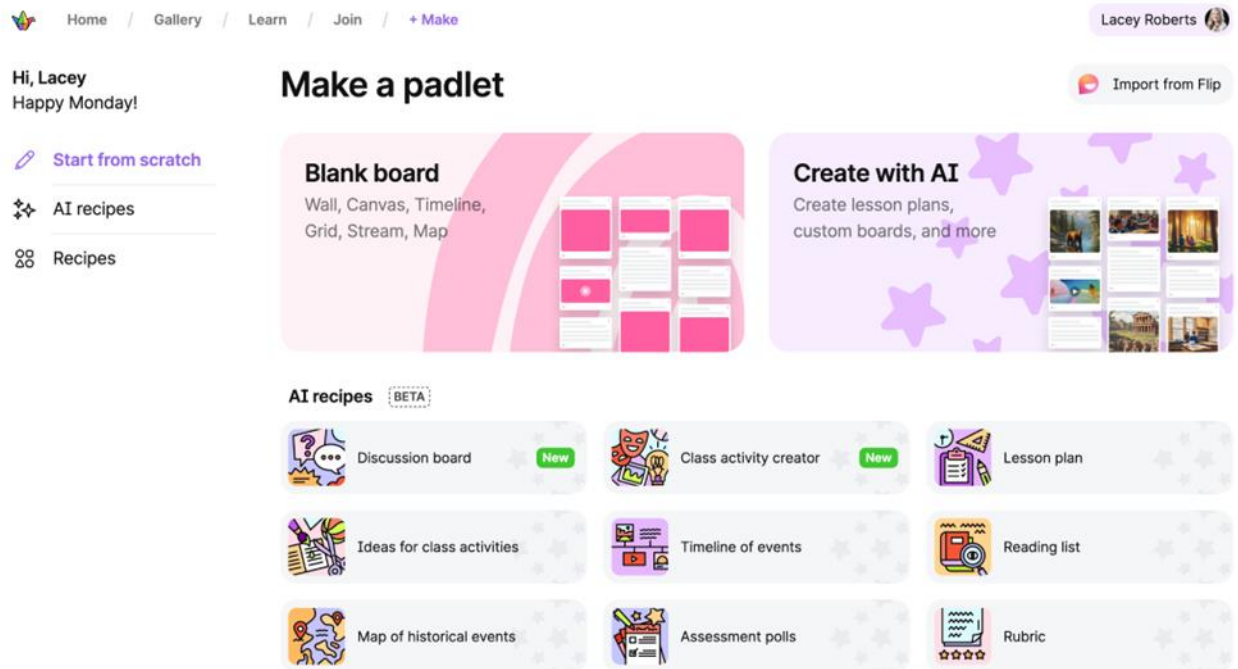
Procedure

Padlet is an online platform that can be used through a web browser or through the Padlet application (app). To get started, an account was created to access the platform. A free account can be created to begin using Padlet in the classroom. Once an account is created, we used the "+Make" button to start a Padlet board. We selected the "blank board" option. Padlet allows creators to choose the type of Padlet board they wish to create. Options include "walls", "timelines", "maps", and more. The selection can be made based on the activity you plan to initiate using Padlet. We used the "blank board" button to create a "wall" style Padlet. The blank board feature for building a Padlet is shown in Figure 1.

It is important to note that a subscription is required to create more than three Padlets. Padlet does offer educational packages for teachers or institutions.

Figure 1.

Screenshot of the landing page for Padlet where an instructor can begin creating a board.

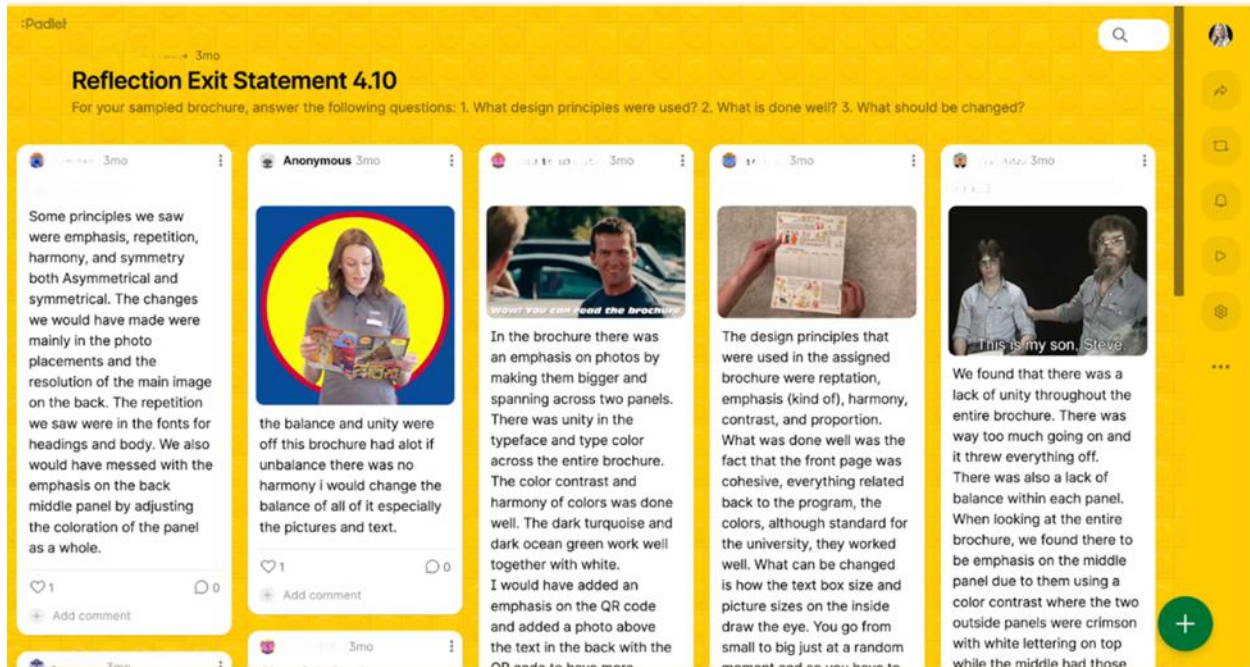


Each type of board is unique and will affect how responses are created and arranged. Once the board is selected, the instructor can customize the board by changing the name, writing a description, adjusting the color or theme, and other additional settings. A question can be added to the description section to aid in the reflection process. In our agricultural communications courses, we posed open ended questions based on previous course content taught or relevant skills practiced in class.

After the board is created, students will need to create accounts to allow them to submit posts. It is recommended students create names so they can submit and answer posts and see their peer's responses. If desired, instructors can also anonymize posts made by students by having students develop an account with an anonymous name. Students can submit responses once the Padlet URL or unique access code has been shared. A response can be created by clicking or tapping on the plus button as shown in Figure 2. Students have the option of uploading an image or gif or choosing from the image library Padlet offers. To finalize the post, students must create a subject and add it to the description box. This allows them to add their reflection with a personal touch. Depending on settings allowed by the instructor, students can also reply or rate peer responses.

Figure 2.

Example of student posts to a Padlet in an agricultural communications course.



At the end of each class period, we asked students the reflection questions and displayed their responses for everyone to review. By posting material for all to view, students built community within their learning environment. Additionally, students identified that there were peers in the course that aligned with their thoughts or experience levels to further discussion course material.

Assessment

Padlet offers instructors the ease and flexibility to encourage reflection in a hybrid modality. The platform allows responses to be shown in real-time as posts are completed, further encouraging active engagement and reflection discussion with peers when shared with students in or out of the classroom. We found that in comparison to private reflection, 76% of students preferred using Padlet. Students said, "Padlets helped me understand what is going on and see things through my peer's eyes." Students mentioned they "like being able to see how others reflected on the lecture or class topic as I can learn from that perspective as well." Pictures and gifs added to the discussion and later improved the student's perceived information recall. When asked about their favorite feature, students said they preferred the option to upload an image or gif. "I like being able to incorporate an image to represent what I am discussing. I think it ties together the thought in a fun way." When asked how Padlet helped students to reflect or remember information, they said, "It provides a visual cue to the information, even if it is something silly that helps my retention and recall."

For future use, we recommend that Padlet be used to help facilitate introductions at the beginning of the semester, along with other reflection activities. Padlet is a great technology option for instructors who build continuous reflection into their classroom design.

References

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