



CONNECT LIKE NEVER BEFORE

Thrive through change -- and build healthy communities
in an ever-shifting landscape

Yellowdig
Learn together

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Our teachers love how the platform enables students to be engaged with the different subjects they are learning even outside of regular classroom time.

~Jeremy Lugbill, Career Academy (High School)

HELLO FRIEND -- AND WELCOME TO A GREAT CONVERSATION.

There's no doubt: Technology provides the opportunity for global human connectivity. But it doesn't always guarantee a genuine connection. That's where Yellowdig comes in. But don't just take our word for it...

In the following pages, you'll hear directly from instructors and administrators. Educators who have used Yellowdig to elevate connection and collaboration in their classrooms. Teachers who have increased participation and engagement through meaningful discussions. Leaders who have reduced drop rates and improved student retention -- all in the wake of a global pandemic.

Changes and challenges are ever present in the world of education. And thanks to Yellowdig, so are solutions and successes. Our platform's flexibility allows you to adapt quickly to shifting modalities, time zones, and technology needs.

So kick back and get ready for a great read. Because this eBook highlights stories across the spectrum of academia. And paints a picture of how incredible educators use Yellowdig to deliver relevant experiences that help learners and leaders thrive through change.



Shaunak Roy
Founder / CEO



Institution: Padua Academy
Instructor: Mike Sheehan, Teacher
Yellowdig User: Since August 2020
Class Modality: Hybrid (face-to-face & online)
Class Title: Honors Philosophy of World Religion
Class size: 31

I had this watershed moment: This isn't a discussion board, this is the lunch table.

~Mike Sheehan

Background

Mike teaches Philosophy of World Religions at Padua, an all-girls high school in Wilmington, Delaware. The course traces perennial elements of spirituality across cultures and time periods, which often means the subject matter can be intensely personal for students. It's the kind of course that requires a welcoming learning environment -- one that supports in-depth discussion and meaningful interaction. That's exactly what Yellowdig's open-minded framework delivered.

Yellowdig In Action

When Mike was faced with transitioning to remote instruction, he needed a program that was agile enough to work with his student population. He also needed to maintain a sense of community -- allowing learners to pick up where the pandemic forced them to leave off.

"Yellowdig is a communal space for my students to discuss content, relate that content to things that are relevant to their own life, or just have tangential conversations. All of these strengthen the learning community I'm trying to cultivate."

Mike's Stand-Out Sentiment

"I was seeing great conversations happen, and I had this watershed moment: This isn't a discussion board, this is the lunch table. It's a community that now exists virtually, since students aren't able to sit together in the cafeteria right now. Conversations that would once happen organically at school are now happening on Yellowdig. And learners get points for the interaction. This kind of engagement is essential. It builds skills that are transferable to real-world discourse."





Institutions:	University of South Carolina & École Des Ponts ParisTech
Instructor:	Lara Lomicka Anderson
Yellowdig User:	Since August 2020
Class Modality:	Face-to-Face
Class Title:	Intermediate French; Speaking Near and Far (English)
Class size:	8 to 10 in the U.S.; 15 in France

My students aren't just writing for a grade. They're sharing perspectives because they know that their peers in Paris will read and write back.

~Lara Lomicka Anderson

Background

Lara is a Professor of French and Applied Linguistics. She also acts as faculty principal. When she teaches her intermediate French course, she does everything she can to create conversation between her students and native French speakers. In an effort to integrate this into the class, she came up with a creative solution to partner with a school in France with students who were learning English. The goal was to help make the language-learning process as seamless as possible.

Lara's Stand-Out Sentiment

"Yellowdig has helped me streamline my grading. It keeps track of the participation points, so I can focus on the rich conversations my students are having! Plus, my students love finding ways to interact and post on Yellowdig. They've added pictures, polls, and links to articles and videos. The platform drives them to go deeper into cultural topics; making them eager to share new knowledge and perspectives. They aren't just writing for me or for a grade -- they're offering their perspectives because they know that their peers in Paris will read and interact with them."

Yellowdig In Action

Lara and her counterparts tried using social-media programs to create and maintain organic international relationships, but nothing was designed to support such a specialized learning approach. That's when Lara discovered Yellowdig -- which made immediate impact:

1. It gave students in both parts of the world an extremely easy way to communicate.
2. It allowed her students to practice the language with native-speaking partners in Paris.
3. It encouraged her students to dive deeper into cultural topics with their peers in France.
4. It scored the interactions that students were having, so Lara could easily integrate participation into a grade.

"It's hard to learn culture through a textbook. But through the topics we post each week, students are able to look outside of their own perspective, values, and beliefs -- and appreciate those of the students in France."



Institution: Beijing National Day School
Instructor: Michael Poth
Yellowdig User: February 2021
Class Modality: Hybrid
Class Title: English 11 Honors
Class size: 64

I find that Yellowdig satisfies a major gap in a student's language practice.

~Michael Poth

Background

Yellowdig supports improved engagement and community even when students in the same class are spread across the world. The gamified point system facilitates the organic and spontaneous nature of real conversations, allowing students to bond with one another at a time when they need it most. The platform keeps curriculum cohesive and communities engaged -- whether students are learning remotely in the wake of a pandemic or connecting virtually in classrooms that span continents.

Michael's Stand-Out Sentiment

"Yellowdig has been a gift! My students are pleased with how accessible Yellowdig is from China. They have difficulty accessing some education websites, even having trouble occasionally with Canvas, but they've had no problems with Yellowdig. I find that Yellowdig satisfies a major gap in their language practice. Most of the time here in China, students are practicing their conversational English verbally and academic English in written form. This is the first time they get to write in a conversational, less-formal way with their peers, and they love it!"





Institution: Salem State University
Instructor: Gayle Fischer
Yellowdig User: Since Fall 2020
Class Modality: Asynchronous Online
Class Title: U.S. Women's History
Class size: 25 to 28

Background

Gayle teaches in the Department of History at Salem State University. She's also on the deaf-spectrum, making her a very unique instructor. Despite the inclusive nature of university campuses, the National Center for College Students With Disabilities estimates that only 4 percent of all faculty members have disabilities, but Gayle's hearing impairment can make conventional classroom interactions difficult.

"As a deaf-spectrum professor, I find oral communication with students to be an endeavor fraught with minor annoyances that can grow into speaking avoidance. It's not uncommon for me to have to ask students to repeat what they said. I may ask again and again. One of three things tends to happen: the student says, 'never mind,' the class as a whole chimes in trying to tell me what the student said, or I ask the student to write down what they are trying to get me to hear."

One can imagine the strain this places on the flow of classroom conversation. So, Gayle set out to find some kind of solution that would alleviate some of the dissonance in her lectures.

More than any other tool I've discovered so far, Yellowdig allows me to truly be me in class.

~Gayle Fischer

Yellowdig in Action

In the Fall of 2020, students in Gayle's U.S. Women's History class were starting discussions on relevant topics such as Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the selection of a new Supreme Court Justice, and a woman running for Vice President. Yellowdig's platform allowed Gayle to participate in these discussions in new and exciting ways, putting an end to years of communication challenges.

"When I discovered how easy and 'natural' conversations could be on Yellowdig, it was transformative for me. For the first time, I felt as though I could participate in conversations with my students without my inability to hear interrupting the flow of discussion. For the first time, my disability was rendered invisible in a positive way."

Gayle's Stand-Out Sentiment

"When I first started teaching at Salem State, I rarely lectured. I spent significant chunks of time designing exercises to excite my students about history and to limit hearing requirements for me. But when the pandemic forced a universitywide reliance on teleconferencing tools and virtual platforms, I found that Yellowdig allowed me to communicate with my students without barriers, even though it's not officially designed to serve those on the deaf spectrum. More than any other tool I've discovered so far, Yellowdig allows me to be truly me in class."

We see in education literature that just formulating a question or formulating the answer to a question has benefits for long-term retention and learning.

~Dr. Vicki Hart



The University of Vermont
LARNER COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

Institution:	University of Vermont, Larner College of Medicine
Instructor:	Dr. Vicki Hart
Yellowdig User:	Since Spring 2018
Class Modality:	Online and Asynchronous
Class Title:	Graduate courses in Epidemiology and Biostatistics
Class size:	30 to 35 (on average)

Background

Dr. Hart, an Assistant Professor at the University of Vermont, uses Yellowdig to teach graduate courses in epidemiology and biostatistics for the Master of Public Health program. Since her students aren't able to connect in a real-time, face-to-face classroom setting, she looked for other ways to foster conversation and collaboration. Dr. Hart found Yellowdig to be the perfect solution for her diverse roster of students -- many of whom are working professionals with busy schedules, demanding careers, and family obligations.

Yellowdig In Action

Dr. Hart's syllabus encourages students to use Yellowdig as a forum for course-topic conversations, as well as for Q-and-A -- allowing them to rely on peers for clarification and guidance. Because of the continuous and open engagement, students built relationships and made connections that they might have missed in a 100% online environment.

"I find myself much more interested in visiting the Yellowdig discussion than I was about going into the discussion board, which really felt like a chore. I enjoy being in Yellowdig, I think it's just so easy."
~ Pallas Ziporyn, Master's of Public Health Student



Dr. Hart's Stand-Out Sentiment

"I'm a huge fan of Yellowdig because it promotes real conversation and connection among my students. It has transformed the online discussion from a check-the-box assignment to a truly useful learning opportunity."



Institution: Drexel University, Charles D. Close School of Entrepreneurship
Instructor: John H. Wilson
Yellowdig User: Since January 2021
Class Modality: Online
Class Title: Ready, Set, Fail
Class size: 12-38

Everyone was sharing ideas about how they were dealing with crazy assignments.

~John H. Wilson

Background

John is a teaching professor at Drexel's school of Entrepreneurship, and the course he teaches is somewhat unconventional. It's called: "Ready, Set, Fail." It's a crash course in one of entrepreneurship's most valuable skills — failing forward. He teaches students how to embrace failure as a learning device. Because, in his words, "the only guarantee in entrepreneurship is that you are going to fail."

John's Stand-Out Sentiment

"Everyone was sharing ideas about how they were dealing with these weird, crazy assignments...It wasn't just them doing an assignment and handing it in to me as a professor. They got to show off their work to their friends and get the high fives or 'that was hilarious' or 'epic fail,' you got a lot of dialogue."

Yellowdig In Action

John turns things upside down -- and uses Yellowdig to do it. To get a good grade in his class, students have to excel at failing. It's a paradoxical framework, but Yellowdig's agility made it possible. As students failed, they were able to document their experiences with peers and exchange valuable insights on how they transformed garbage into gold.

"That's really what this class is about—teaching them how to fail in a way that will allow them to recover emotionally, financially, and physically."

In fact, 25 percent of a student's grade was based on their use of Yellowdig because John understood the importance of collaboration and mindfulness. Students needed to glean insights from their failures, and Yellowdig was the place where they could organize their reflections.



Yellowdig's gamified framework encourages students to post actively and often.

~ David Blakesley



Institution: Clemson University
Instructor: David Blakesley
Yellowdig User: Since 2017
Class Modality: Hybrid & Online
Class Title: Graduate Seminars in Rhetoric & Undergraduate Technical Writing
Class size: 10 to 20

Background

David is the Campbell Chair in Technical Communication and a Professor of English at Clemson. He teaches a variety of graduate seminars in rhetoric and rhetorical theory, many of which were delivered in a hybrid format prior to the pandemic. He also teaches an undergraduate course in Technical Writing, which has always been online and asynchronous. With all courses moving completely online, David needed an adaptable platform that would allow students to communicate effectively regardless of their location.



Yellowdig In Action

Students are free to engage and participate in relevant discussions through Yellowdig. The platform provided a natural outlet for learning, stress relief, and relationship building.

"Yellowdig's gamified framework encourages students to post actively and often, respond to each other in writing, and acknowledge the writing of others with emojis. Instructors can motivate deep engagement with accolades. Yellowdig's automated grade passback makes management of this whole process a joy rather than a chore."

David's Stand-Out Sentiment

"'Grading' writing is always a chore for writing teachers. But 'responding' to student writing is not. Yellowdig encourages dialogue between and among students and instructors, which rewards everyone through new insights and creates a sense of community. That's the heart of good teaching. Plus, Yellowdig encourages the use of writing to learn, which allows students to learn the content faster and more deeply through informal dialogue with their peers. This makes learning dialogical and collaborative."

At last, a tool that throws out the old and ushers in a new paradigm focused on community building.

~Aimee Whiteside



Institution: University of Tampa
Instructor: Dr. Aimee Whiteside
Yellowdig User: January 2021
Class Modality: Face-to-Face
Class Title: Writing + Research
Class size: 38 in Yellowdig, 2 classes of 19

Background

Dr. Aimee Whiteside, co-editor of *Social Presence in Online Learning: Multiple Perspectives on Practice and Research*, is a professor at the University of Tampa. She teaches first and second-year students how to write research papers -- a course that's integral to their future success.

Dr. Whiteside's Stand-Out Sentiment

"As someone who has studied social presence in teaching and learning for almost twenty years, I am both excited and intrigued by the possibilities of Yellowdig. This excitement is much more than just another novel tool, but rather it is a new way of conceptual mapping for creating and extending connections in and out of the classroom."

Yellowdig In Action

Students are often nervous. Many of them have developed some bad writing habits while others have a penchant for procrastination. On day one, Aimee assures them that procrastination will not be an option. She then lays out her plan for "scaffolding" their research process, essentially guiding them through a multistep process. Yellowdig is the platform she uses to facilitate the journey, both in and out of the classroom.

In the classroom, she uses Yellowdig to gather reflections at the end of class -- opening up a free-flowing conversation while the class is still together. This helps keep priorities from turning into worries. The thoughts and feelings all come out on Yellowdig, encouraging students through gamification. The process helps the whole class gain confidence. That's the word she loves hearing come through right now.

"At last, a tool that truly throws out the old and ushers in a new paradigm focused around social presence and community building."



The ability to shift modes, to re-imagine and re-think course content and delivery, all while maintaining a sense of community, will set programs apart and help institutions leap ahead of the competition.

~ Tawnya Means



Institution: University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Faculty: Tawnya Means
Title: Assistant Dean and Director of the Teaching and Learning Center, College of Business

Tawnya's Standout Sentiments

"The COVID pandemic has taught us of the importance of agile and disruption-proof educational delivery. The ability to shift modes, to re-imagine and re-think course and content delivery, and to maintain a sense of belonging and community while providing effective, high-quality, transformational, and engaging learning experiences will set apart programs and institutions, allowing them to leap ahead of the competition at a time when many will struggle to survive.

Prior to 2020, there were many beliefs and concepts we held about education that we can now consider in a different light. First, we thought that there were courses that really could not be taught online (e.g. science labs, music, dance, architectural design, field classes, etc.). We considered teaching with technology an enhancement and not something that everyone would do. We also did not imagine that courses would need to be designed to change midstream and be offered in a different mode, or that

courses would need to support students in-person and online at the same time, sometimes even with an instructor that was not in the same location as the students.

The COVID pandemic is not the first crisis to impact education (e.g. Spanish Flu pandemic in 1918, Polio outbreaks in 1937, Swine Flu in 2005, Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Rwandan genocide, Ebola outbreaks in Africa, as well as multiple regional or localized weather-related disasters). The impact of COVID has touched every single institution of learning, globally -- from preschool to higher education, not to mention its impact on countless other organizations. The experience of shifting all education to remote and hybrid delivery has taught us that the right technology is not a "nice to have" but a necessity. High quality, evidence-based pedagogical tools for delivering learning experiences, maintaining engagement, supporting interaction, and building and maintaining community are vital to creating disruption-proof education."

I first tried Yellowdig to host a poster session last Spring that I had intended to be face-to-face. I loved how it allowed my students to share their work beyond our class.

~Jennifer Samson, Queens University

Yellowdig is a digital engagement platform designed to create meaningful learner engagement online.

yellowdig.co