Ideas for Using Padlet in Collaborative Learning

Padlet (along with its educational version, Padlet Backpack) is a versatile, collaborative, cloud-based platform that allows one to create boards and backchannels. Because of its versatility, there are a variety of ways that teachers and students can make use of it in a classroom environment (whether real, virtual, or blended). Below are some of our suggestions for how Padlet can be effectively used to encourage collaborative learning.

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Backchannel/Live Question Bank

A **backchannel** is a digital space in which users communicate about a concurrently run face-to-face activity. During conferences, for instance, audience members may comment on or pose questions about a workshop or keynote. Teachers can use backchannels to give students a place to ask for clarification or comment on the primary activity (e.g., a teacher’s lecture, a video, group work or presentations). Instructors can help direct student-posting by asking guiding questions, requiring students to pose and answer their own questions, or asking them to collaboratively take notes. Since backchannels are saved and can be edited, they may serve as useful references after the activity’s end. As well, Padlet’s backchannel format makes setting up a backchannel easy.

Brainstorming/Concept-mapping

Padlet’s canvas format is useful for collaborative brainstorming and **concept-mapping** since with it, users can post text, video, images, web links, documents (such as Word or PDF), voice memos, drawings, etc. and can move their posts around, link them with connectors, and comment on and react to them.

Content-sharing/Jigsaw Strategy

The comment feature allows a more interactive approach to content-sharing since students can use it to offer feedback or ask questions about what is shared. As a result, Padlet is useful for **jigsaw** activities in which students are divided into groups and assigned different sub-topics relating to a larger topic. After completing their group work, students come together to share their findings and to join the pieces together to gain an understanding of the whole. Using the comment feature, groups can share their findings and peers can offer feedback on each other’s work through votes, likes, or comments.

Collaborative Curation

Increasingly, curation is being touted as an **essential 21st century skill**. In a digital age that has brought on an information overload, it is more important than ever that students know how to select relevant, valid, and appropriate sources. Curation helps develop multiple skills such as analysis, organization, synthesis, critical thinking, communication, active-reading, and research.
Online curation involves a clear process:

- Collect online content related to a given topic or area interest. (This is not random but a purposeful collection).
- Select the best, most interesting, or most relevant content.
- Organize and contextualize the content by offering annotations. Why is it being shared? How does it relate to other curated content? How does it add to the overall perspective or perspectives generated by the chosen content?
- Share the content.

Padlet walls can be used for each stage of this process. As well, by asking students to curate on a platform such as Padlet, teachers can choose whether students curate collaboratively in groups (working with one Padlet wall) or individually but offering peer feedback using the comment feature. Moreover, Padlet’s design features make for a visually appealing presentation of the curated content.

**Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) and Immediate Feedback**

Classroom assessment techniques involve asking students for feedback on a class lesson or learning activity to ascertain what learning has taken place and what further clarification may be needed. CATs can take a variety of forms, such as a minute paper, a single sentence summary of the day’s learning, or an exit question (e.g., “What was the clearest/muddiest point in today’s class?” or “List three questions you have about today’s lesson.”).

Padlet can also be a helpful tool when using active learning strategies such as the immediate feedback technique, in which a teacher presents material, asks students a question related to it, then has them submit their answer to an online platform. If answers are satisfactory, the teacher moves on. If not, students discuss their answers in pairs, revise them, and post again. To encourage deeper learning, students could be asked to vote on the answers they feel are best.
E-Portfolios
E-portfolios support complex, deep learning. They allow teachers and students to keep track of their learning process and promote the development of such skills as critical-thinking, analysis, organization, and synthesis, among others. Students can use a Padlet wall (or multiple walls) to create e-portfolios. With a Padlet Backpack license, students have access to unlimited walls, so they can create different walls for different portfolio categories or create portfolios for their different courses.

Group Projects
Padlet is a tool that can be used throughout the different stages of collaborative projects. Group members can use their own walls to take notes, gather relevant sources, etc. Group walls can be used for brainstorming, sharing of sources, posting one’s writing, planning presentations, or presenting work.

An Example of a Group Project Using Padlet
As part of a Vanier interdisciplinary project, students from the Communications, Media and Studio Arts and the Business Administration programs analyzed ads for the same product created in two different decades. In the initial stage, each group used their own Padlet wall to propose ads to their teammates which they thought were most suited to the project. Group members then reviewed each other’s choices, using the comment and voting features. The two ads that received the most votes were chosen. Each group then created one Padlet wall where they shared research about the products advertised and their targeted markets and collaboratively analyzed the ads. Finally, they used Padlet instead of PowerPoint to present the ads during their group’s in-class oral presentation (see details below under Visual Aids).

Ice-breakers
Because Padlet is synchronous, it is a useful ice-breaker tool. For example, students could be asked to post a six-word story, to write the funniest caption to an assigned image, or share a link to their favourite film, or podcast, or video game, etc.

Peer-assessment
As mentioned, Padlet can be used as a space where students post work and provide feedback on the work of their peers. Individuals or groups can be paired and, using assigned assessment criteria, provide feedback on each other’s work.

An Example of Peer-Assessment Using Padlet
One Vanier teacher used Padlet in her Spanish-English translation course as a space for peer-assessment of students’ translation assignments. Students posted their translations on their own Padlet wall, which they shared with their partner and the teacher. Using the comment feature, their partners gave them feedback on the translations using translation principles discussed in class. To ensure meaningful student feedback, the teacher provided students with criteria for peer-assessment, so students knew the quality and nature of the input they were required to give. By giving and receiving feedback on their work, students not only benefitted from their peer’s insights but reinforced their own understanding of the principles, which helped them as they did the final editing of their work.
Presentations
As mentioned above, Padlet's design features are aesthetically pleasing. Users can choose their wall’s format and background image. Links to articles or videos are usually accompanied by eye-catching images or logos. Uploaded files are turned into thumbnails that, when clicked, open in a full window for easy viewing. Thus, Padlet offers an alternative to PowerPoint when presenting one’s work.

Templates
Just as Padlet’s Canvas format is useful for concept-mapping, it can also be used to create templates for students to fill in. By setting the right permissions, teachers can easily share these with students. As always with Padlet, the comment feature allows teachers to provide feedback on the filled in work.

A Tip When Using Padlet to Analyses of Videos
As part of an interdisciplinary project, two Vanier teachers asked their students to present their analyses of selected videos they’d posted on Padlet. Videos appear as thumbnails on a wall, which one clicks to open in full screen. Although time didn’t permit students to play even part of a video, they were able to pause a video and scroll through it to different moments they were discussing in their analysis, thus providing them with useful visual aids.

Figure 6: Creating templates using Padlet

An Essay Outline Template in Padlet
A Vanier teacher created an essay outline template for her student, to give them a visual representation of the basic structure of the essay. Students were able to save a copy and fill it in to generate their own essay outlines. She was then able to use the comment feature to provide them with feedback. Such a template could also be used for later stages in the writing process: students could upload their own notes or quotations in the relevant paragraph sections, to help them organize their ideas.