eTools: Using Flipgrid in the Classroom

Amy Duchsherer, North Dakota State University

Introduction

Student interaction is an integral part of many communication classrooms. However, facilitating interaction between students can be challenging, especially outside of class time or in online settings. Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Blackboard offer some tools for student-to-student interaction including discussion boards, but these tools often limit interaction to text-based formats. Flipgrid is an online tool that can help foster student interaction and develop stronger classroom community through video sharing.

What is "Flipgrid"?

Flipgrid is a FERPA-compliant online video discussion platform that encourages "social learning" and classroom participation through the sharing of student voice. Emulating social media platforms that students are likely already using (e.g., Snapchat or Instagram), Flipgrid is intuitive and simple to navigate. The user-friendly platform can be used on any device (e.g., computer, smartphone, or tablet), which makes this tool easily accessible.

While Flipgrid has been widely used in K-12 classrooms, it is gaining popularity in the college and university setting as well. Instructors create "grids", which allows instructors to organize individual courses or units within a course. Inside each grid,

instructors develop "topics" that contain a specific prompt for students to answer. Instructors can also attach resources (e.g., YouTube videos or videos recorded by the instructor) that students can engage with to complete the prompt. Furthermore, Flipgrid provides instructors the ability to control several aspects of their grids/topics, including the capability to moderate responses before being available to other users, the option to set time limits on responses ranging from 30 seconds to 5 minutes in length, and the opportunity to share and highlight student responses that are especially insightful.

How can I get Flipgrid for use in the classroom?

If the prospect of using Flipgrid in your classroom is enticing, you can access this tool by visiting https://flipgrid.com. Just click on the "Sign up Today" link in the upper right corner and choose the option to sign up using either an existing Google or Microsoft account. Once you have created a grid, your students can gain access by entering the Flip Code (i.e., a short alphanumeric code generated upon grid or topic creation) into the text box on the landing page. Instructors have the option to allow students secure access to private grids through their school e-mail domain or by assigning student IDs (e.g., using students' university-assigned ID numbers is a simple way to allow students to access the grid). Best of all, Flipgrid is free… I repeat, *free* to students and instructors!

How can I use Flipgrid in the classroom?

The uses for Flipgrid are numerous and can be adapted to meet the needs of face-to-face, online, and hybrid classrooms. Many of the activities you already do in your classroom via traditional text-based discussion board can be easily adapted to work on Flipgrid. However, Flipgrid has an added advantage of providing students with extra practice in organizing and presenting information for an oral format.

Some specific examples of how Flipgrid can be integrated into your classroom include:

1. *comprehension checks.* Comprehension checks on Flipgrid have been a game changer, especially for my online classroom. I find that students need to have a strong grasp of concepts to verbally describe and defend how concepts relate to a given prompt. In these comprehension checks, students can share their understanding of course concepts by recording short videos explicating assigned reading material and applying concepts to day-to-day activities. To allow for more specific or deeper application of course concepts, you could add a link to a cultural artifact (e.g., movie clip, news article, or song) to which students can apply course concepts.

2. *community building.* Time for interpersonal interactions between students is a limited resource in face-to-face classrooms; logistically, this effect is often multiplied in the online classroom. Flipgrid is an excellent way to facilitate deeper interpersonal interactions between students for both face-to-face and

online classrooms. For example, you might choose to have students complete introductions via Flipgrid or create prompts allowing for self-disclosure throughout the semester. Even without specific prompts geared toward self-disclosure, students will become more familiar with one another as they see each other's faces and share their knowledge of course concepts via Flipgrid throughout the semester.

3. *presentations.* Providing students with a realistic experience of presenting to an audience in an online classroom can be challenging. Students can record their presentations for an authentic audience (i.e., their classmates) and post them to Flipgrid; this is particularly useful in online public speaking classrooms. Instructors also have the ability to add guests to view a topic, which may be useful for class projects that involve creating pitches for local community groups. Instructors of face-to-face classes may also find utility in having students deliver presentations via Flipgrid, especially when classroom time is limited.

4. *collaboration with other educators.* Educators can collaborate through Flipgrid by adding 'co-pilots' to boards. For example, if you know a scholar who is an expert in something your class is covering, you can add them as a co-pilot and let them share their knowledge with your class. This tool allows you to give your students new perspective and insight that you may not have and

provides a scenario that allows the guest instructor to provide input in a way that accommodates their time constraints and schedule.

5. *Discussion-based activities.* An easy way to integrate Flipgrid you're your classroom is by converting existing discussion board assignments to use Flipgrid instead of your current discussion board platform of choice. A variation of this option is to utilize discussion leaders and assign students a discussion topic to facilitate on Flipgrid. Discussion-based acties may require students to pose a specific amount of questions to the class and respond to posts throughout the week to ramp up discussion on the topic. Instructors can also check in throughout the week and help push conversation forward if necessary.

6. *a video message center.* As an instructor, you can add extra interaction with your students by using Flipgrid as a video message center. Using Flipgrid as a video message center has several applications. For example, you could record short messages to clarify assignments or provide video feedback on formative assessments. Additionally, Flipgrid could be used as a space for asynchronous virtual office hours for both online and face-to-face classrooms.

Conclusion

Flipgrid provides a unique video discussion platform for students to gain valuable student-to-student and student-to-instructor interaction. Because Flipgrid emulates

social media that students are likely already using, they may feel more comfortable with

the technology than tools currently integrated in LMS systems. Easy to access and free

to use, Flipgrid is worth a try in your classroom!