Twitter in the Classroom

A Comparative Case Study

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Research Question

What are best practices for implementing Twitter in the classroom?
• Three distinct 400-level classes taught by three different instructors in three different disciplines at the same university

• Two classes in the College of Agricultural Sciences, one in College of Education
Why Twitter?

• All instructors had similar rationale:
  – Connect with students
  – Build classroom community
  – Teach digital literacy and citizenship
  – Build professional community of practice
Data Collection

- pre and post questionnaires
- classroom observation
- student tweets
- student focus groups
Class A (A as in Awesome)

- Embedded course
- 9 students
- 8 females, 1 male
- 1 student had a Twitter account and actively used it

- Secondary purposes for Twitter use:
  - get practice trying something new before traveling
  - Create strong support network among students
  - Connect students to Spanish-speaking community
Class A

• Twitter incorporated into grading scheme

• Students required to tweet three times/week

• Twitter rubric
• Students used Twitter to:
  – communicate with the instructor
  – provided “status updates”
  – and shared Spanish resources not normally shared in class
Class A

- “Another social media site to keep up with”
- Students tweeted in rapid succession
- Did not interact with other students unless instructed to do so
- Pre/post test did not change student perceptions about Twitter
- Students indicated they preferred Facebook for social interactions
Class B \((b\ is\ for\ brilliant)\)

- Cohort of pre-service teacher candidates during their student teaching experience
- 13 students
- Required to tweet once/week
- Completion activity
- 6 students had a Twitter account but did not actively use it prior to course
Class B

• Students used Twitter to:
  – Share secondary student success in the classroom
  – Share Technology and curriculum resources
Class B

Number of tweets:
- Average: 105
- Low: 15
- High: 432

- Some absolutely rejected and did only minimum
- Access to mobile device had huge impact on use
- Attitudes change when others engaged them on Twitter
Class C (c is for...charismatic?)

- 11 students
- All female
- Cohort of students majoring in elementary education
- 10 students had a twitter account and actively used it
Class C

- Instructor did not incorporate Twitter into the syllabus or grading scheme
Class C

- Students utilized Twitter to:
  - Share information about personal lives
  - Quote instructor (during class)
  - Share pictures of in-class assignments
  - Network with students from previous cohorts
Class C

• “Fun!”

• “Interesting way to connect with classmates.”

• Many students tweeted at all hours of the night

• Hundreds of tweets generated by students during semester

• Instructor noticed Twitter drew students in to class/cohort
Comparing Cases

• Findings suggest that varying methods of implementation of Twitter can lead to vastly differing outcomes.

Well, we're both fruit.
Comparing Cases

- Initiation
- Student preferences
- Interaction with others outside of class
- Grading scheme