

Ten Strategies for Building Community with Technology, 2014. By Bernie Potvin, Nicki Rehn and David Peat. Brush Education, Publisher. 196 pages. ISBN 978-1-55059-552-9

Reviewed by Diane P. Janes

Introduction

The first thing you notice about *Ten Strategies for Building Community with Technology* by Potvi, Rehn, and Peat (2014) is that it describes itself as a handbook; and a handbook it is. It is an overview of 10 models that promote community in the classroom. The book focuses on classrooms across the spectrum: face-to-face, blended, and online deliveries. As someone who has worked as an Instructional Designer, and teacher of instructional design, this is a book that will come in handy the next time I have a design conversation with a colleague or a student.

Potential Audience

Created for a multiplicity of audiences – current teachers, teachers in training, educational board and district leaders, home schooling families, and any teacher wanting to use technology in their classrooms – the book is divided into four sections and offers the reader many options when considering how, when, and why to use technology in their teaching.

Scope of the Book/Content Organization

The first three sections deal with the 10 models. Section one describes the models, which range from transmission and direct instruction to project-based learning, apprenticeship, case study, and inquiry-based learning. The second section takes those 10 models and offers case studies and examples of how they can be used in support of technology-supported courses and programs. Section three offers tactics for each of the models – how do you design and implement those models into learning experiences?

Section four is unique in that it is designed to answer common questions that arise when facing the design, or redesign, of a technology enhanced learning environment. These are questions that I have heard repeatedly as I have worked with educators to move their teaching into technology enhanced learning, which can be a new delivery model for them. Questions like “How can you use technology to teach a physical or psychomotor skill?”, “How can you use e-portfolios to create community?”, or my personal favourite: “How can you provide multiple ways for students to express and show what they have learned?” The list goes on, as there are 20 such questions and answers in this well written book!

And yet it doesn't finish there. The book ends with five appendices that encompass a glossary of terms; the principles of learning and planning; a piece on digging deeper, which includes a delightful addition to the book with discussions of nurturing, shared praxis, and Socratic dialogue, among other topics this section touches on; an overview of the models, with a handy table that gives you key components at a glance; and finally, additional reading for those wishing to delve deeper into the field of technology enhanced instructional design.

Summary

This book is a resource that I would use in my practice daily. Consider if a colleague says “I would like to redesign my course, and use case studies”; this book gives a compact, yet detailed, discussion of this choice and facilitates the opportunity to discuss with great depth, the who, what, when, where, and, most importantly, the why of choosing one model over another.

If you need a handbook to help enhance your students’ learning in classrooms with technology, and you need something that is clear and concise in its writing, and that offers opportunities within each option, this is the book for you. It offers suggestions and ideas that are not out of the range of possibility for most practicing teachers, and so offers solutions to educational problems that are within reach of the classroom teacher.

Overall, this book is well written and well designed. I recommend that it become part of your professional bookshelf.

Author

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