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Beyond Four Walls: Enhancing Project-Based Education Through VoiceThread

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BEYOND FOUR WALLS: ENHANCING PROJECT-BASED LEARNING THROUGH VOICETHREAD

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Overview

VoiceThread was integrated into a traditional design studio to explore how online technology can facilitate the frequency of descriptive exchanges outside of a project-based class.

Using VoiceThread enhanced our in-person course by:

- Engaging students in surprising ways
- Transforming how students seek feedback
- Expanding the project audience
- Heightening the learning and teaching experience

Overview

This presentation will review:

- Online challenges for project-based learning
- Attributes of VoiceThread
- Experience integrating VoiceThread into a traditional, in-person design studio
- Theory
- The impact on teaching and learning

Online Challenges for Project-Based Learning

Project-based courses (design studio, STEM disciplines) require instructors to facilitate interactions that promote the dynamic exchange of ideas and information to push the development of ideas, knowledge base, and skills.

Formative
- Mid-process
- Critique and reviews
- Stage of development
- Performance

Summative
- Accurate / quantitative
- More strict (possibly)
- Grade-based assessment

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Project-based classes struggle with how to do this online.

Online Challenges for Project-Based Learning

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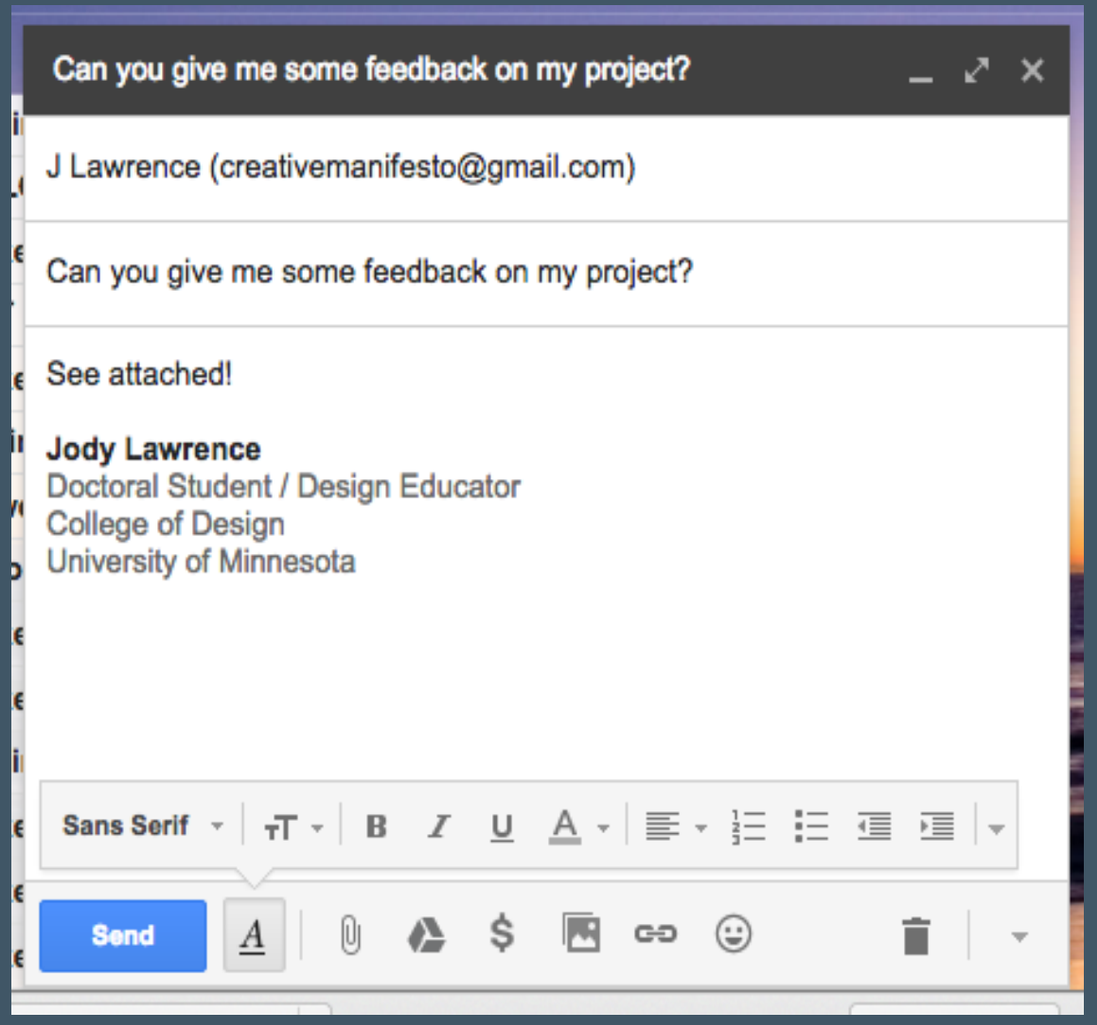
For design studio, critiques are typically formal, and include feedback from a combination of visiting professionals, instructors and other students.

These are typially in-person activities for design education.

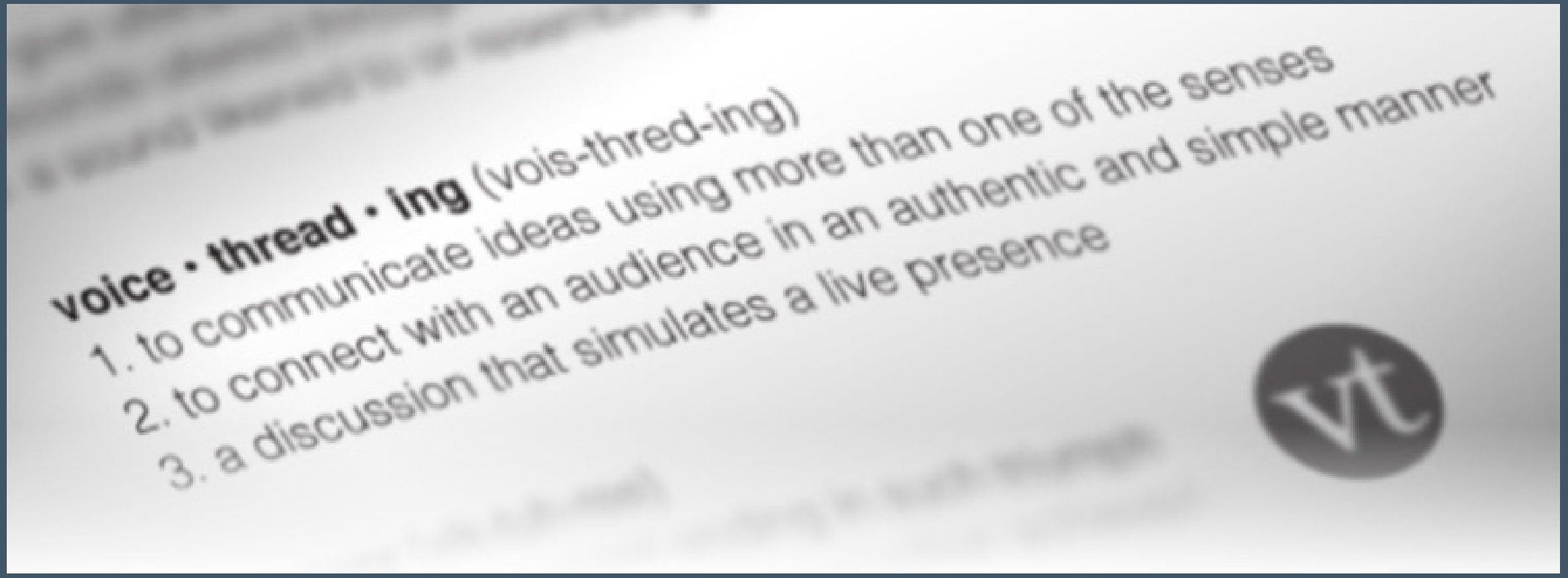
Online Challenges for Project-Based Learning

Formative assessment outside of a project-based learning environment:

- Email, limited to written feedback
- Spend more time obsessing that it's an academic document
- Dynamic reciprocity of dialogue vanishes
- Feedback is less descriptive
- Students are less likely to incorporate changes the respond to the feedback



VoiceThread



VoiceThread

- Online discussion space
- Media is presented as a slide-show or “thread”
- Anyone can be invited to participate
- Feedback tools include written, audio and video options
- Audio and video comments include a drawing tool for annotating
- Feedback can be reviewed prior to delivery

Unique Attributes:

- Threads are accretive, built upon over time
- Threads can be exported as videos for archival

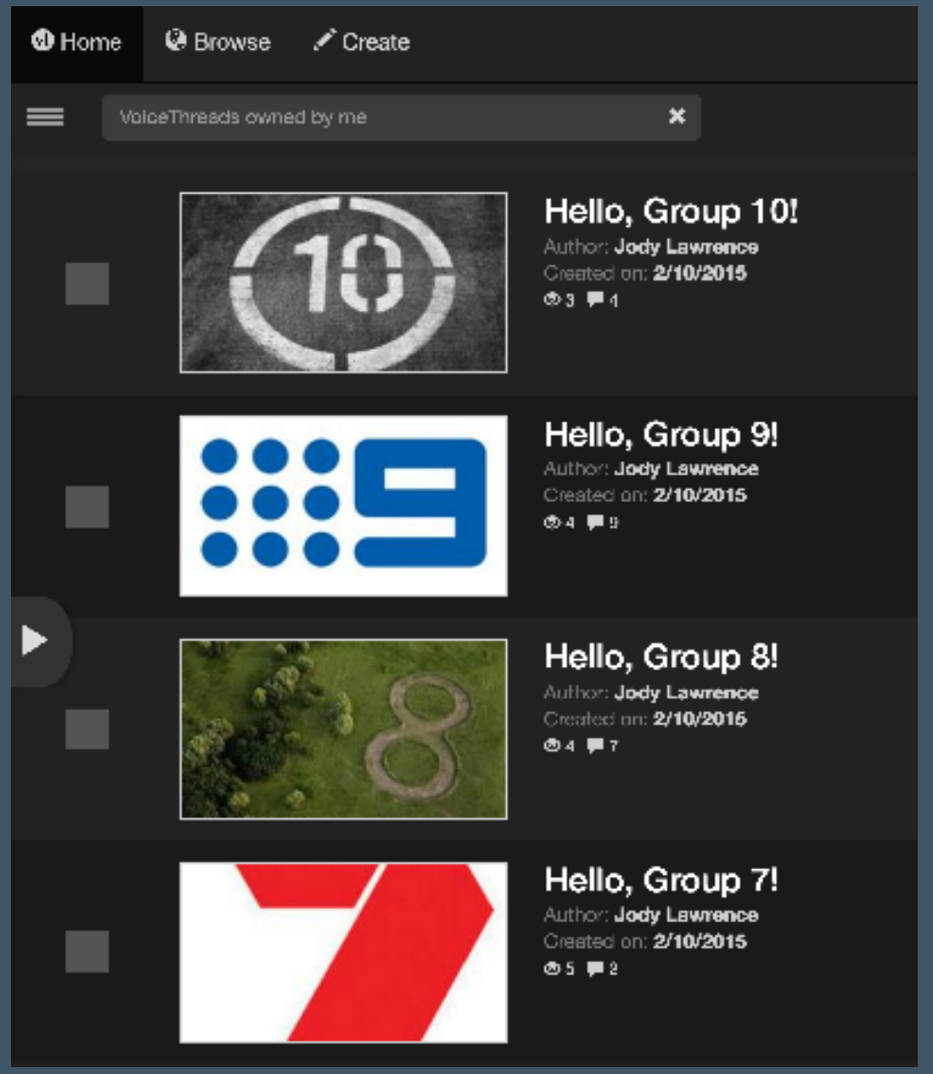
This longitudinal model of assessment to project-based learning is powerful.


ONLINE CRITIQUE
(Slide 1 of 2)
Participant 1
Participant 5
The colors merge or fold into one another, providing a lot of opportunities for spatial continuation. The different textures and materials reflectivity's reinforce the idea of lightness and airiness by the way light and color move across the surfaces.
AIRY
OPEN TO A FREE CURRENT OF FRESH AIR;
BREEZY; GRACEFUL; DELICATE
IDES 1602 SEC 2
MARCH 11, 2015
CONCEPT BOARDS

Experience Integrating VoiceThread

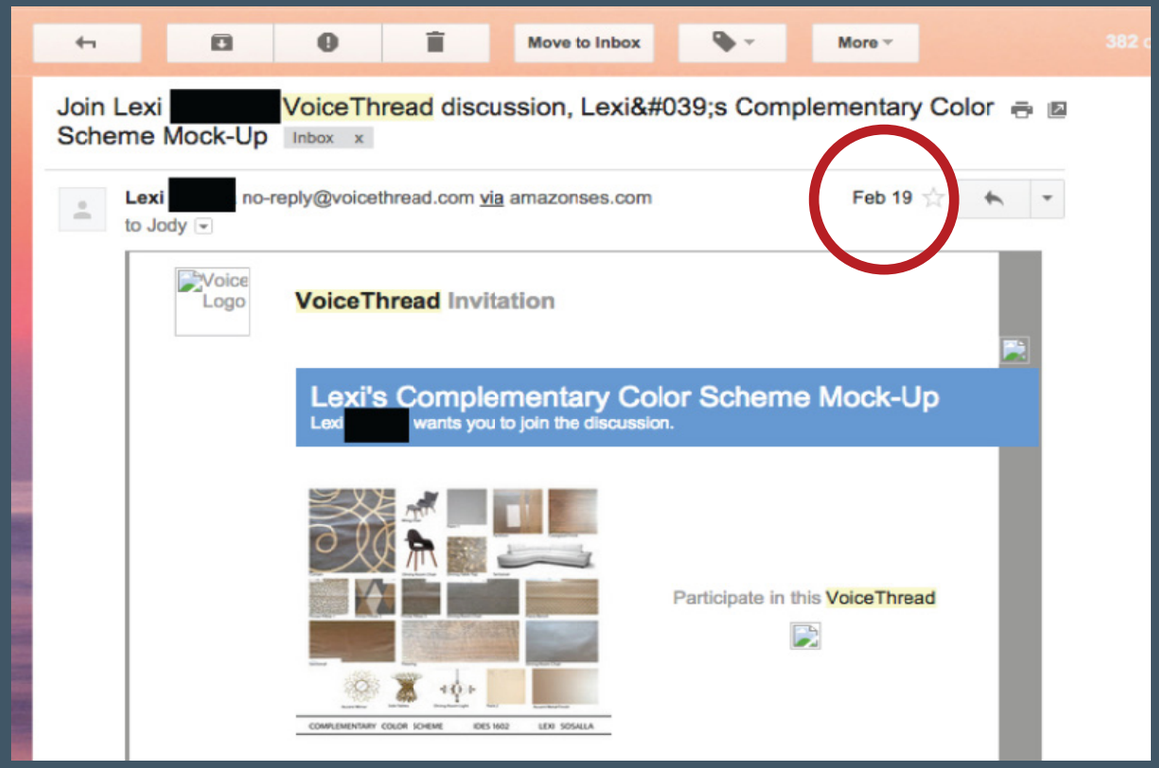
Application: Peer critiques

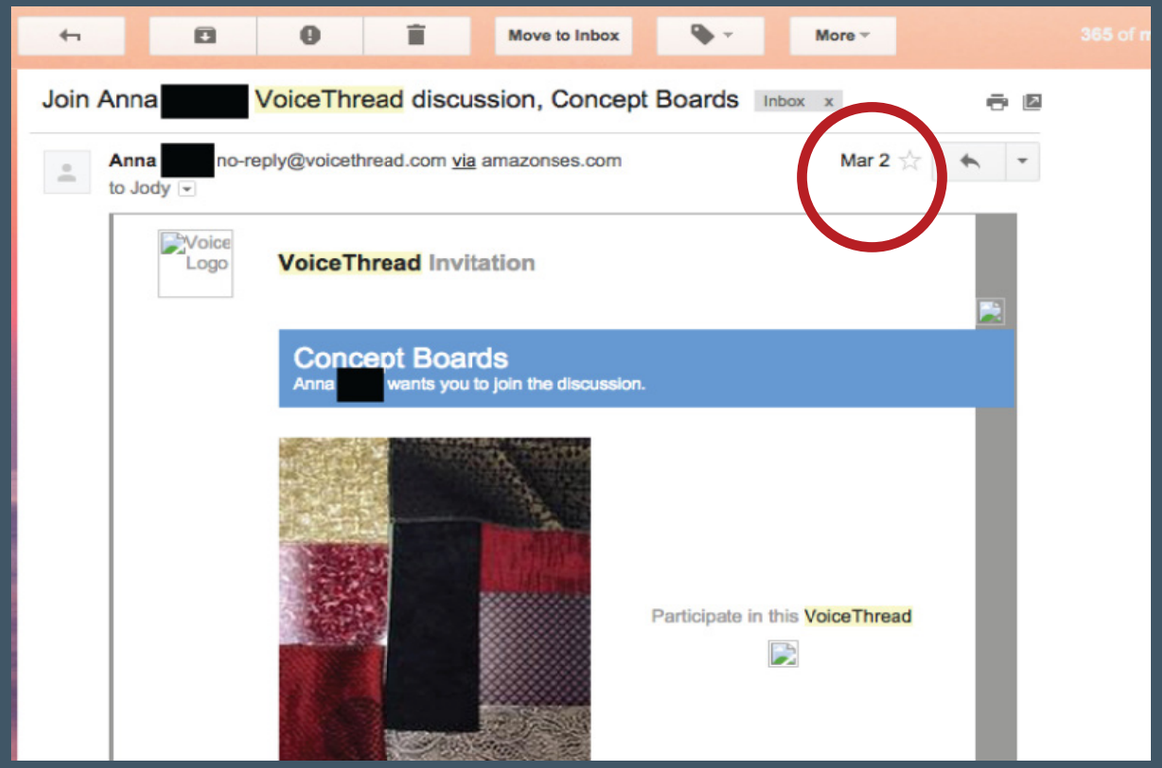
- Acquainting the class with the program by connecting students with each other outside of class (including other sections)
- Activity set-up
- Moderation and monitoring
- Critiquing the critics



Experience Integrating VoiceThread

And then this happened…





Experience Integrating VoiceThread

Experience Integrating VoiceThread

Application: Communication (student driven)

Platform for learners to solicit feedback

- Autonomy to engage in design discourse outside of class
- Decline in email synchronous to an increase in student-generated threads
- Fluidity of learning

"This online program allows us to view the work of other students across different sections and is allowing us to get feedback out of class without wasting valuable class time."

Experience Integrating VoiceThread

Application: Outsider critiques

- Diversity of visitors (geographical and schedule constraints removed)
- Convenience
- Access the community you want… not just those in your backyard
- Breadth of evaluation -- additional perspectives, expanded knowledge

"The advantage of VoiceThread is that everyone can have a record of the development process as it happened, allowing for further study and review as well as allowing access to such information anywhere and anytime. The fact that multiple reviews from many individuals are recorded is a benefit to everyone involved in the exchange of information."

Experience Integrating VoiceThread

Applications to Date (all outside of an in-person class)

- Peer critiques
- Teacher response to learner solicitations for feedback
- Teacher initiated feedback to students
- Outsider critiques
- Demonstrations
- Assignment submittals
- “Watch me” threads -- Am I doing this right?
- Mentoring: “You’re not my professor anymore… But, can you take a look at this?”

Experience Integrating VoiceThread

Dissolving the walls…

- Fluid and frequent dialogue outside of class
- Exposure to professionals outside their immediate community
- Private and repeated review of feedback, on their own time
- Discussions that extend far beyond the limits of an afternoon
- Post-project reflection
- Student preference for continuity
- Platform for students to solicit feedback outside of class

Experience Integrating VoiceThread

And promoting…

- Descriptive feedback -- Ice et al. (2007) suggests verbalized feedback conveys more nuance, and makes learners three times more likely to apply the feedback when developing their work. Davies (2007) suggests that students learn more when descriptive, verbalized assessment increases.
- Natural communication -- Embracing the use of adjectives, nuance, and worrying less about dotting the "i" and crossing the "t."
- Convenience -- The VT app, the "super connector"
- Growth -- Our experience shows that VT is comparable to in-person methods; asynchronous means are powerful in supporting learners!

Theory

Origin of Interest
- Verbal and multi-variable feedback = more descriptive = perceived as “caring”
- Autonomy
- Social media - phenomena and associated behaviors

Necessity
- Facilitate the formative process for courses with intervening gaps of time
- How can we do what we do without talking?
- Use of devices - it’s not just our students with their nose to the screen
- Online components may be critical for making in-person courses successful

Impact on Teaching and Learning

Outside of our own observations, we've received positive responses from...

- Teaching evaluations
- Post-course survey
- Student statements
- Student nominated awards
- Testimonials
- Adoption of use (the technology)
- Requests to continue using it
- Subsequent use (current status)
- Student preferred format for mentoring

Impact on Teaching and Learning

In summary, or experience suggests that VoiceThread has benefits that extend beyond its use as an effective method for discussions, and serves to complement the rigor of project-base classes.

Questions?

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References

Davies, A. (2007). Involving students in the classroom assessment process. Ahead of the curve: The power of assessment to transform teaching and learning, 31-57.

Ice, P., Curtis, R., Phillips, P., & Wells, J. (2007). Using Asynchronous Audio Feedback to Enhance Teaching Presence and Students' Sense of Community. Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks, 11(2), 3-25.