

Introduction

Effective online instruction requires meaningful interaction (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000). Traditionally, discussion boards have been an essential tool to provide opportunities such opportunities in online and hybrid courses. The Blackboard discussion board

common way to interact online in the 1980s and 1990s and is now seen as out-of-date and unfriendly by both faculty and students.

Yellowdig provides a way to engage learners differently. Yellowdig is a social media style discussion platform with the look and feel of Facebook, and it can be integrated with the Blackboard Learning Management System. Rather than offering a post and reply bulletin board structure for discussion within lessons, Yellowdig can be used to engage students throughout a course. With a single feed and posts tagged with topics, students continue to access and interact with the material even after a lesson has finished. The social media style interface and interactive tools offer significant advantages for discussions in online and hybrid courses.

BACKGROUND

A review of the literature suggests that social media style online discussions could enhance student engagement and student learning.

More active online discussion increases student engagement and satisfaction (Shea, et al, 2000; Drouin, 2008).

Facebook, when offered as an alternative to an LMS discussion board for students, had four times the number of posts from only 41% of the student population (Schroeder, J. & Greenbowe, 2009). These benefits depend on active and meaningful interaction between instructors and students.

Features of Yellowdig are designed to encourage meaningful interaction and prompt feedback, including:

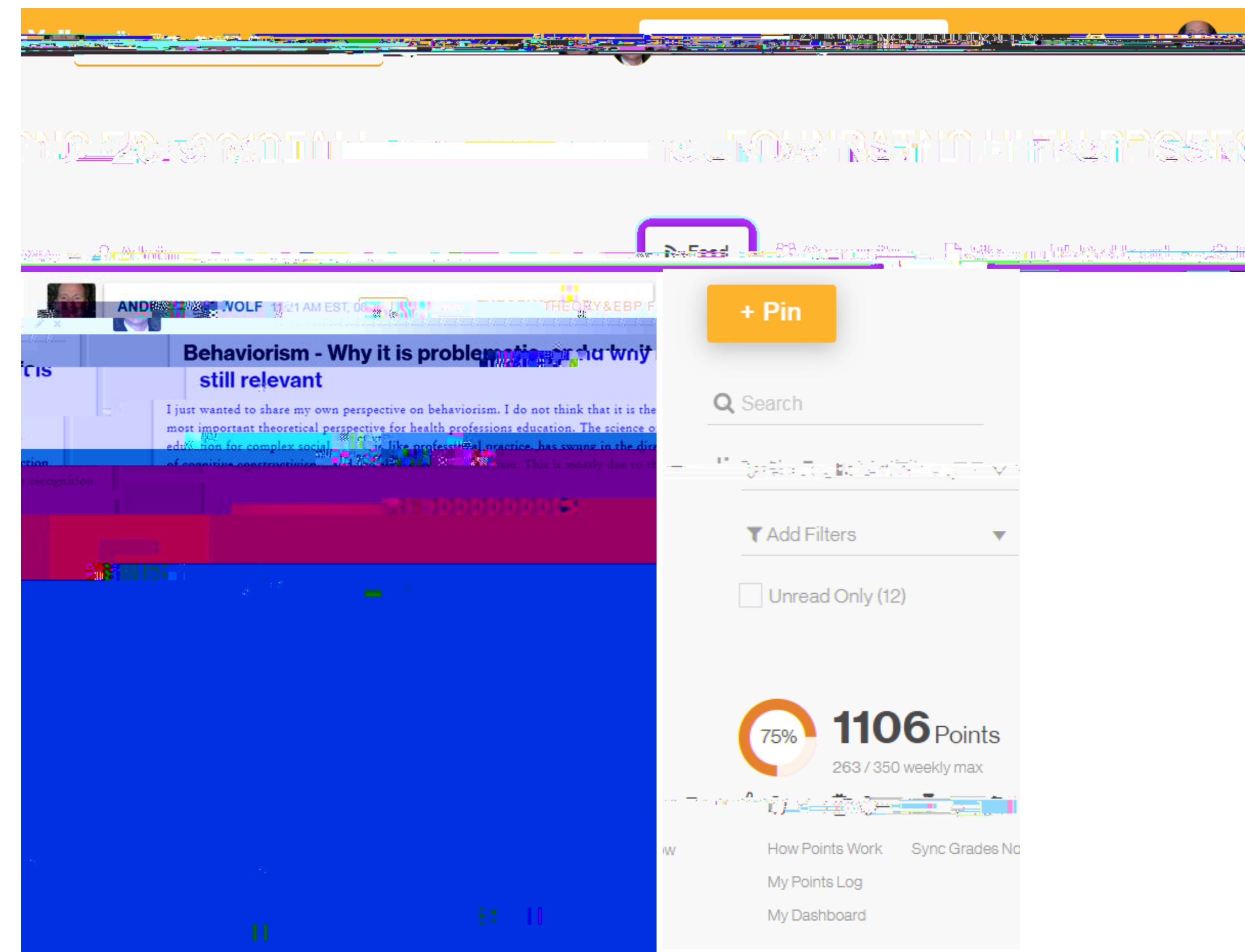
- Gamification with point system & badging
- Social media style feed
- Tagging people in posts

Schools that have implemented Yellowdig have found significant benefits to student engagement & learning (Yellowdig, 2018).

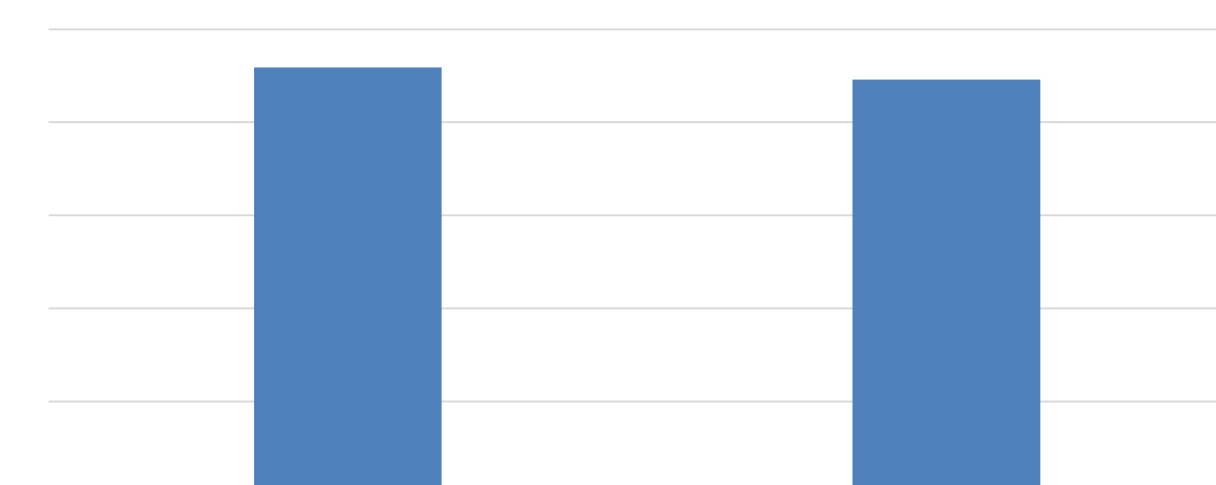
METHODS

Yellowdig was implemented in 3 classes in Spring, 2019:
EDE 484: Online Teaching & Learning (n=12)
EDU 581: Clinical Teaching in Health Professions (n=24)
NUR 354: Nursing Leadership & Management of Care (n=6)

Either a replacement for, or supplement to, Blackboard Discussion Boards.



OUTCOMES



Response Rate= 66.7%

OUTCOMES (Cont.)

Qualitative Survey Responses

Enhanced conversations:

It felt like FB and the discussions were much more fluid. It made it interaction with classmates better and made it easy to keep track of your posts and the comments you receive. I liked that it encouraged more frequent posting and interaction than Blackboard did.

Easy to Use & Navigate:

It was easy to navigate, I could easily search for my posts and those of my classmates, the notifications were appropriate and kept me current, and I liked how the posts could be organized by topics. More organized than Blackboard discussions, it was easier to follow up topics and main ideas.

Points were difficult to understand and seemed unfair or subjective:

I think it would be much better if you come up with objective criteria regarding crediting good pins (badge). This will help to minimize subjectivity of the instructor. Sometimes you end up writing anything just for the points, even if there is no real value to the comment because you are forced to be compliant with the points. The points system was so stressful and completely unrealistic,

Not intuitive:

The forum is not intuitive. Better instructions are needed. It was tough for me to get up to speed on how to use it. The hash tags and dashboard didn't work out for me until the end of the course. It's hard keeping track of all of the previous posts and going to a specific post in the forums.

Better than Blackboard:

I think that it keeps students engaged. I highly recommend the use of Yellowdig. So far, Yellowdig offers much more interaction with students and instructor than blackboard's discussion forum, but it is a little harder to navigate. I wish we could use this forum for all classes that require discussion board post I would like other courses to use it!

CONCLUSIONS

Yellowdig was successfully implemented in 4 classes.

Students felt comfortable interacting in Yellowdig, with both fellow students and with faculty.

The majority of students enjoyed key features of Yellowdig, like points, tagging, and liking posts.

Most students prefer Yellowdig over Blackboard discussion boards.

The majority of students believed that Yellowdig improved engagement, enhanced community, and increased understanding. Yellowdig was easy to use and navigate.

Some students felt like it was hard to use, and "get up to speed" when getting started with Yellowdig.

Some students complained noted the Yellowdig point system seemed unfair, arbitrary, or confusing.