

# MADE FOR HUMANS



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# UNIQUE LEARNING COMMUNITIES FOR HUMANS

Yellowdig is proud to partner with passionate faculty members who value the role of active learning and community building in supporting academic outcomes. Our core offering for our partners is the use of Yellowdig in traditional course settings in tertiary education, however there are fantastic examples of creative and unique use cases where faculty have leveraged Yellowdig to further strengthen their learning communities beyond course confines. These examples are so inspiring because as we all know, lifelong learning can happen anywhere, and learning communities are not just necessary for traditional, for-credit classes.

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# The University of Michigan

## Opportunity

The University of Michigan's School of Public Health Instructional Services Team had an opportunity to partner with one of its innovative Professors and Associate Dean for Education, Dr. Sharon Kardia, to determine the best way to support a simulation exercise in an online class.

## The Population Health Course

This second year course in the online MPH program offers students the opportunity to formulate multi-sector collaboration experience in population health. The course is fully online for 6-weeks, with both synchronous and asynchronous components. One of the critical learning outcomes of this course is a unique, 3-week role-playing simulation, whereby the professor and students take on the role of various real-life professionals working to address the Opioid crisis in the state of Ohio. For example, students could assume the role of high school leaders, Opioid prevention experts, or experts working in government/public health roles. For this exercise worth 40% of their final grade, students were provided with specific goals including developing proposals, forming coalitions and putting forward an evidence-based population health intervention.

Technical requirements for the simulation exercise included the ability to build character profiles, engage in group discussion, share links resources & media, 1:1 messaging and system notifications. After a 3-day trial to explore Yellowdig as a solution, Dr. Kardia chose this social learning platform as it met her must-haves and offered the additional benefit of learning analytics.

Feedback from students was overwhelmingly positive. The concept of the simulation itself was a success (credit to Dr. Kardia); 92% of students said the simulation learning experience was innovative and 67% said Yellowdig aided in engagement with the role-playing simulation. In addition, from a Professor perspective, Dr. Kardia felt using Yellowdig was a game-changer, and provided a vehicle for students to take their roles into action.

*"I believe the role-playing experience on Yellowdig was a great way for us to get an understanding as to how public health would work in real life. We were able to see what it would be like to form coalitions and come up with proposals to work towards solving a problem impacting our 'community'"*

*- Yellowdig student*



# Georgetown University

## Opportunity

When most everything went online during the COVID lockdown, the administration of Georgetown McDonough School of Business assigned Associate Professor [Dr. Lee Pinkowitz](#) as the head of the Online Pedagogy Team. This team was tasked with helping peers at Georgetown quickly adapt to a new and unprecedented learning environment.

Dr. Pinkowitz's previous experience teaching and developing online courses gave him a good sense of the technological requirements of online learning but also the pedagogy required to deliver positive learning outcomes.

Dr. Pinkowitz and his colleagues immediately began searching for online learning platforms that would "improve on traditional discussion boards".

Dr. Pinkowitz is a charismatic and proven educator of more than 20 years. He understands there is more to learning than what meets the eye and he has incorporated elements of community and gamification into his teaching since before the pandemic. He and his peers chose [Yellowdig's Pilot Program](#) because of its focus on community and ability to gamify the learning environment.



"What I was looking for was [a platform] that would promote a sense of community," he shared. Most years students go through multiple orientation activities and see each other on a regular basis, naturally bonding as peers. This time around, it was not the case. This is the first reason why Dr. Pinkowitz chose to pilot Yellowdig; a student-centric platform with a focus on community.

The second reason is gamification. Dr. Pinkowitz has "played around with gamification" for years, handing out in-class awards for student achievements and engagement within the classroom. In the context of emergency remote learning he said it was "immediately apparent that [gamification] would be valuable" because without it, there would be little incentive to participate and engage.

Before Yellowdig, Dr. Pinkowitz had taught courses that were both in-person and online for periods of time. To keep the learning community active when fully online, he created and distributed awards to students who engaged positively in the community. "I am a believer in collaborative learning. People who put forth an effort to collaborate should be recognized." The reaction from students was so positive that; "By week 6 of the course, I was recording award ceremonies in a tux and even had the Dean deliver one of the awards. The students loved it so much, some of them even recorded acceptance speeches and posted those in the community". Postmaster General, Helping Hand Award and the Community Builder, just to name a few, were awards based on Yellowdig engagement data which incentivized students to continue to interact in their communities. The result was a positive educational experience and outcome.

The evolution of Yellowdig over traditional discussion boards enables this effective form of learning through community and gamification. Yellowdig's engagement data, Accolades, and the social engagement format were all key features Dr. Pinkowitz highlighted as part of the success of the pilot at Georgetown.



*"By week 6 of the course, I was recording award ceremonies in a tux and even had the Dean deliver one of the awards. The students loved it so much, some of them even recorded acceptance speeches and posted those in the community".*

*- Dr. Lee Pinkowitz*

# Algonquin High School

## Opportunity

As you have read so far, Yellowdig is geared toward creating learning communities centered around higher education courses. Nonetheless, the fundamentals of online community learning remain true in other educational environments. At Algonquin High, school faculty members utilized Yellowdig to supplement the need for an online learning community and recognized the value of the student-driven discourse that was taking place.



Kim Honey, a former Social Studies teacher and current Librarian at the high school, saw a unique potential to take that student-led engagement and create an impact in her summer reading group. Aiming for a fun and social summer reading experience, Kim opted to try Yellowdig for this summer.

## Yellowdig in Action

Over the course of the summer, up to 1,500 students and faculty are invited to participate in a community of readers. Through the online community, they will explore multiple books and exchange ideas while also meeting in person on a regular basis.

Due to the COVID pandemic, incoming 8th graders didn't have the opportunity to intermingle with their future peers. This summer reading course is a channel for them to start to socialize with other members of the high school and build relationships as they engage and learn. For the other students, Yellowdig will offer a unique social, gamified environment to dive into reading and engage through critical thought.

Kim understands that there is a strong incentive to participate when your course grade is in play, but that isn't the case here as this is an optional activity. Yellowdig's Point System and the social format of discourse work together to create a self-driven intent in students to engage with other community members. Kim intends to bring that element of gamification to the next level by providing in-person awards for high performers in her group, members who she can easily identify thanks to Yellowdig's participation data insights and **Network Graph**.

Another clear benefit she sees in this pilot is the opportunity to create a safe space for students who are shy and rarely participate in traditional learning environments. In other courses at Algonquin High where Yellowdig was utilized, teachers led the conversation by creating over-arching Topics but encouraged students to spark the conversation. The result; many students came out of their shells and

even proposed topics of discussion that they likely would've been too shy to bring up in class. Kim shared; "I think that there is a dialogue that took place on the platform that never occurred in a classroom. We have really enjoyed the authenticity of the conversation."

Being a social platform, Yellowdig offers a familiar space of discourse for students in this age range while also keeping a focus on exercising skills of communication, research, critical thinking, and much more.

The Summer Reading Course at Algonquin High School is ongoing as this is written and will finalize nearing the beginning of the next school year. At Yellowdig we aim to support learning incentives that value social connection, that is why unique cases like these encourage us to continue to innovate to provide an effective learning tool for students everywhere.

# A PLATFORM DESIGNED FOR HUMANS

Yellowdig's philosophy is deeply ingrained in our platform design and is core to supporting the development of active learning communities across any delivery modality. The human-centric approach to developing and optimizing Yellowdig's Engage Platform creates a holistic community-building tool that helps instructors stimulate active learning with less intervention.

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# Building Active Learning Communities

Yellowdig's fundamental purpose is to build educational communities that provide its members with a positive learning outcome. Building these communities in an ed-tech environment requires a data-driven pedagogy and the correct technology to support and promote interest and engagement amongst students. Communication focused technology is not enough to drive learning outcomes. Yellowdig helps achieve learning outcomes because it is a deliberate combination of social technology and data-driven pedagogy. Partnering with faculty to build active learning communities that are inclusive, agile and technologically capable has helped institutions double student engagement, reduce drop-out rates by 14% and maintain student satisfaction rates above 90%.

One key combination of our pedagogy and technology is Yellowdig's patented Point System. Points, equivalent to a grade percentage of the course, are distributed automatically according to each students' engagement within the community. Different interactions merit a different number of points as defined by the instructor. These points have a direct impact on course grades

and incentivize students to meet or exceed a baseline of participation in open-ended and dynamic conversations.

Standard discussion pedagogy, and technology, typically require a conversation ratio of 2-to-1. This means for every post, any one student will comment twice. At Yellowdig we purposely stray from rigid prompts and interaction requirements, rewarding learner agency and authentic engagement by incentivizing listening, sharing and interacting rather than prescribing communication type. As a result, the expected conversation ratio in Yellowdig communities is 7-to-1 which means more back and forth conversation amongst students. This yields higher instructor and learner satisfaction, more voluntary participation, and ultimately stronger learning communities.



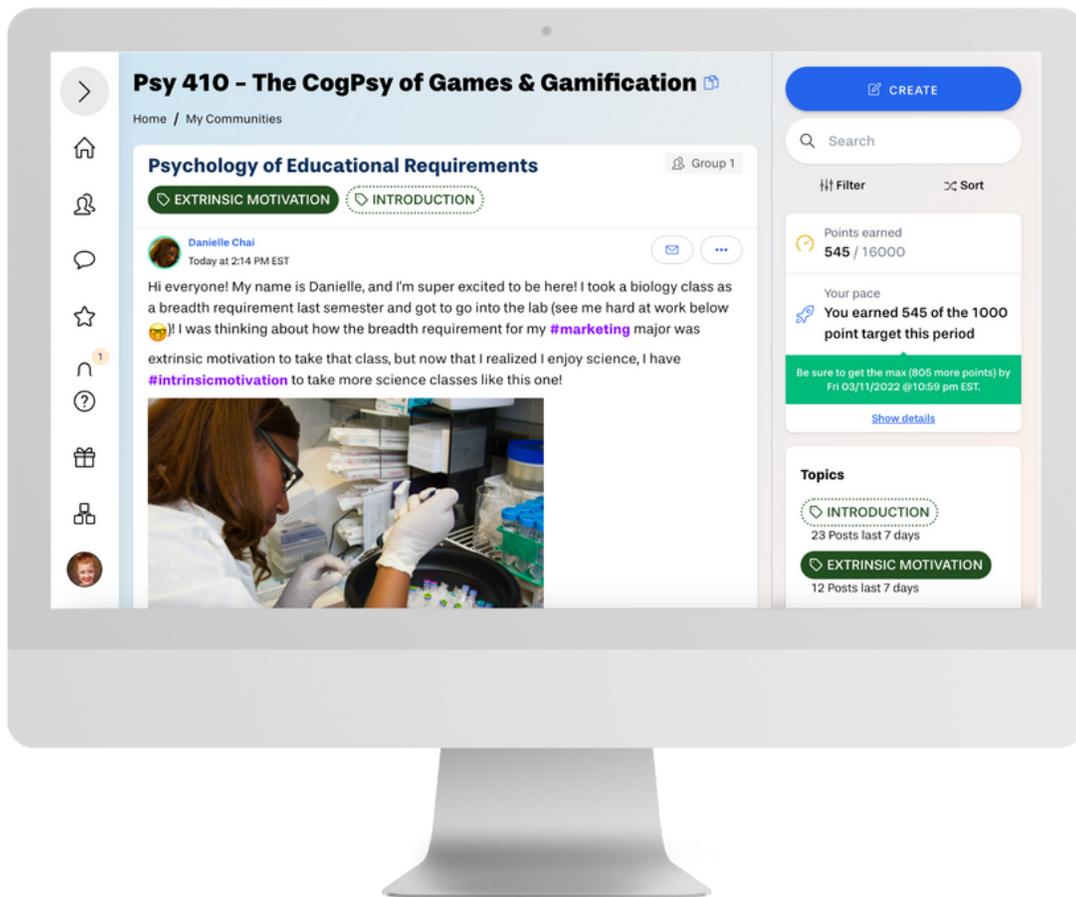
# Delivering Community with Relevance

Relevance in Yellowdig refers to many things. Starting on a high level, Yellowdig is built to adapt and accommodate different modalities, tech needs, time zones, and languages. This flexibility allows us to help learners, educators and leaders continue to thrive through change. This focus on relevance and ability to adapt to unique learning environments remains even in the details.

Topics in Yellowdig are themes of conversation which tie the course together as it progresses, ultimately making the content relevant to the course as well as current events and students' personal experiences. Faculty can create topics at the start and continue to add more as the conversation develops. Relating content with specific Topics is more than just an organizational tool; it's a malleable course guide and eventual study tool that is influenced by teachers and students alike.



When posting, users can select from a list of existing Topics to add to their post, where at least one is required. Topics can be generic across courses, such as Poll or Q&A, and function as an organizational tool that allows users to easily identify posts and their context as well as filter posts to find specific content. However, as a best practice, we recommend creating Topics that follow the overarching theme of the course and include specific terms or concepts that are directly related to the learning material.



Trending Topics help the community follow along with what's being discussed, ensuring relevant and meaningful conversations are highlighted. However simple this may sound, Topics have a profound impact on the interactions that take place and ultimately transform the learning experience for students. Conversations that are meaningful and relevant to current events and course topics create a positive learning outcome, and as such, they should be encouraged.

Through Accolades, faculty can create custom rewards and award them to students for a

number of achievements within the community. These awards are also worth participation points and therefore provide an incentive for students to earn these Accolades and help feed the conversation.

Some faculty have even taken inspiration from this and given in-class awards to students who have also earned Accolades in Yellowdig. This helps promote the relevance of the activities that take place within Yellowdig by seamlessly transferring them to the classroom environment.

# Driving Academic Outcomes

Ultimately, Yellowdig is on a mission to deliver positive learning outcomes. Our platform is about more than discussion posts, responses, and AI-delivered high fives. It's about active engagement, meaningful interaction, and actionable metrics.

For faculty, it's important to have a complete vision of the engagement that takes place in their communities. These interactions represent student's curiosity, their eagerness to learn and participate, and most importantly, the efficacy of learning that takes place within that community. It's also important to note that by having this complete view of communities, faculty members can improve how they interact with students, and by extension, their educational outcomes as well.

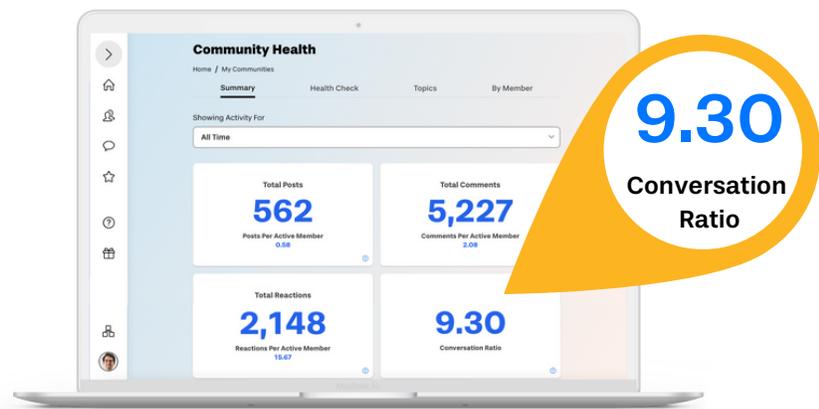
The first feature geared toward Outcomes is the Community Health Dashboard. This tab provides a high-level overview of the health of your community, with metrics regarding posting and other interactions. Within the

same tab, the Health Check feature utilizes a Yellowdig score to assess community health.

Based on student **Sharing, Listening, and Interacting**, each area provides custom metrics that can be compared to a global Yellowdig score, to your University, or to another specific community of your choosing. Knowing your score is great, but understanding why your community is given a score can be essential in taking action to improve that score, and in turn, the learning efficacy of your community.

Yellowdig's philosophy is backed by data and research. Enabling all the features and settings within the **Best Practices** list is yet another step toward creating a strong, outcome-focused community that will enable interactive learning for students.

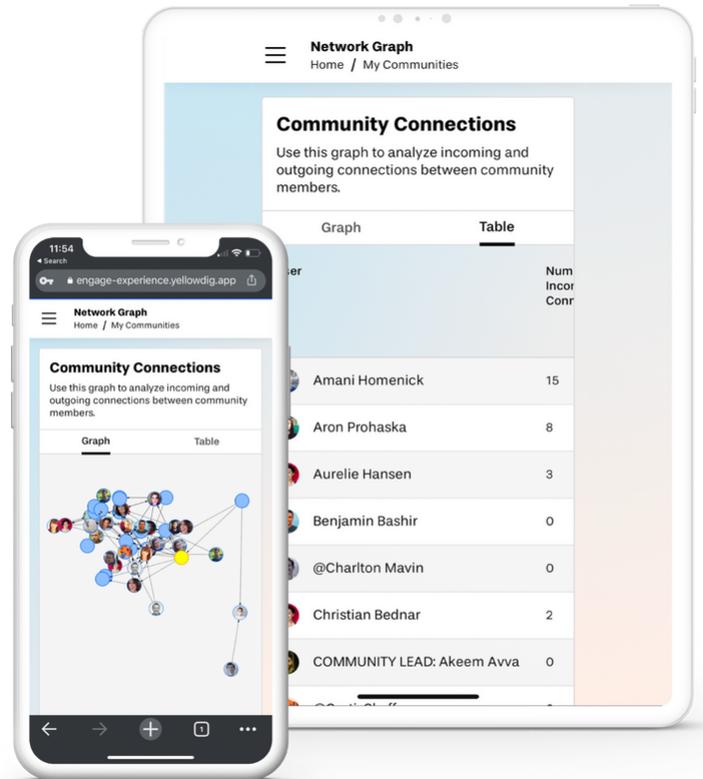
For more curious faculty members, the **Topics** and **Member** tabs allow for further in-depth analysis of which Trending Topics and community Members are having an impact on the community as a whole.



The second feature that provides great insight is **Network Graph**. Network Graphs are a visual representation of all incoming and outgoing connections between community members. These connections represent interactions where students are commenting, sharing, or reacting to another student’s post. The more connections among students, the healthier the community and more impactful the learning experience within this community.

Network graphs can be visualized as a network or web of connections, but also as a table graph more suitable for detailed analysis. In the network view, thicker lines between students represent deeper connections where these students are continually sharing with each other. By hovering over any particular student, a brief summary of their interaction behavior is displayed, such as to what percentage of students respond to their posts, and to what percentage of other student’s posts they respond to.

For faculty, this tool is extremely useful in identifying strong members of the community as well as others who are struggling to incorporate themselves and might need a helping hand. This eye-opening tool has helped



increase student retention and positive outcomes. Network graphs are a powerful insight, providing a unique opportunity to change teaching approach, reach out to students who struggle, and further encourage students who are already making the most of their learning experience through Yellowdig.

# PURPOSE-DRIVEN SOLUTIONS MADE BY HUMANS

At the crossroads of technology and pedagogy, there is an opportunity to transform the way students learn. At its foundation, Yellowdig is designed to make learning student-centric by creating connection and community. For many Yellowdig team members, their life story was deeply touched by education. Some are from families of educators, others ventured into ed-tech to solve a problem they struggled with personally, and others simply wanted to make learning better for others. Everyone at Yellowdig shares a desire to spark a love for learning through pedagogy and community.

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