

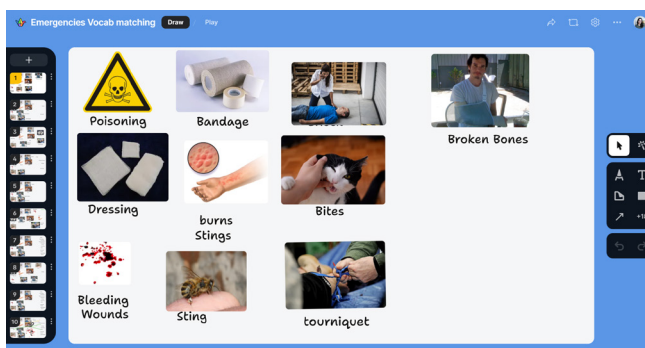
Technology and Adult Learning

Padlet: Enhancing Collaboration with Adult Learners

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As educators continue to seek innovative tools that foster collaboration and engagement in the classroom, Padlet has emerged as a versatile and user-friendly platform. This interactive online tool functions as a virtual bulletin board, allowing users to post and share content in various formats, including text, images, videos, and links. Its intuitive design and collaborative features make it especially valuable in adult education, where fostering student participation and interaction is critical. The platform supports diverse pedagogical approaches, making it a versatile tool for adult educators aiming to enhance student participation and interaction in their courses (Ali, 2021; Nozaki, 2023; Phenwan, 2023). Recently, Padlet introduced a new feature called Sandbox, which offers an alternative to Google's Jamboard, a tool that is being phased out by the end of the year. In this column, I will explore how Padlet—and specifically its Sandbox feature—can address key teaching challenges in adult education.

FIGURE 1



What Is Padlet?

Padlet (padlet.com) is an online platform that enables educators to create virtual walls where students can post contributions such as text, images, videos, or links. These walls facilitate brainstorming sessions, collaborative projects, or reflective exercises. Padlet's adaptability to different learning styles makes it a valuable tool for adult education.

The Sandbox feature enhances Padlet's utility by replicating many of Jamboard's functionalities while allowing users to import existing Jamboard files without losing content or structure (Figure 1). For educators familiar with Jamboard, it is a digital whiteboard tool that supports real-time collaboration through sticky notes, drawing tools, and multimedia uploads. Sandbox retains these features while introducing additional capabilities unique to Padlet.

Sandbox vs. Jamboard

For those familiar with Jamboard, Sandbox offers several advantages:

- **Unlimited Walls:** Unlike Jamboard's limit of 20 boards per account, Sandbox allows unlimited walls in the paid version.
- **Enhanced Customization:** Sandbox supports richer formatting options for posts (e.g., colors and shapes) and allows integration of multimedia elements like videos or GIFs directly into the wall (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2



- **File Import Flexibility:** Educators can import existing Jamboards into Sandbox seamlessly while maintaining their layout and content.
- **Organization Tools:** Sandbox offers advanced organizational layouts like columns or grids, which are not available in Jamboard. These tools help educators keep content structured and accessible for learners.

Unique Collaboration Features in Sandbox

Sandbox also introduces innovative collaboration features that enhance its functionality in virtual and hybrid classrooms:

Breakout Room Integration: Educators can create multiple breakout links within Sandbox and share them with different groups in a video conferencing platform. Each group receives its copy of the Sandbox wall to work on independently. For example, during a professional development workshop, participants could be divided into breakout rooms to brainstorm solutions to specific workplace challenges. Each group's Sandbox copy allows them to collaborate privately while maintaining focus on their assigned task.

QR Code Sharing: To simplify access, Sandbox generates QR codes that students can scan with their devices to join a wall instantly. This feature is particularly useful in face-to-face settings where learners may not have immediate access to shared links. For example, during a classroom activity on financial literacy, an instructor could display a QR code on the projector screen, enabling students to quickly join and contribute ideas.

While Jamboard excels in simplicity and ease of use for quick brainstorming or sketching activities with its intuitive drawing tools, Sandbox surpasses it by offering more robust collaborative options and organizational flexibility.

How Padlet Addresses Teaching Challenges

The educational technology tool Padlet has emerged as a significant resource in addressing various teaching challenges in adult education. Its interactive and collaborative features facilitate active learning, which is particularly beneficial for adult learners who often bring diverse experiences and knowledge to the classroom. Padlet allows for a more engaging and participatory learning environment, which can enhance motivation and retention of information among adult learners (Bakar & Hashim, 2022; Etfita et al., 2022; Naamati-Schneider & Alt, 2023).

One of the primary challenges in adult education is fostering engagement and participation among learners. Some teachers may fail to accommodate the diverse needs and learning styles of adult students, leading to disengagement (Floyd, 2022). Padlet addresses this by providing a platform where learners can contribute to discussions, share resources, and collaborate on projects in real time. Moreover, Padlet supports the development of essential skills such as collaboration, critical thinking, and digital literacy, which are crucial for adult learners in today's job market (Gawin, 2021). The platform encourages collaborative learning by enabling students to work together on tasks and projects, thereby enhancing their ability to communicate and solve problems collectively. Additionally, the use of Padlet can help adult learners visualize their thoughts and organize information effectively – skills that are particularly beneficial in subjects requiring critical analysis and synthesis of information (Gawin, 2021; Ofianto, 2024).

Real-Life Applications of Padlet and Sandbox

Here are practical examples of how educators can use these tools in adult education:

- 1. Brainstorming Sessions:** In Sandbox, students can collaboratively brainstorm ideas for a group project by posting notes with their suggestions (Figure 3).
- 2. Concept Mapping:** Using Sandbox's grid layout, students can create concept maps by dragging and dropping images or text boxes to connect related ideas. For example, in an ABE reading/writing class, learners could visually map out the writing process and define each step (Figure 4).

FIGURE 3

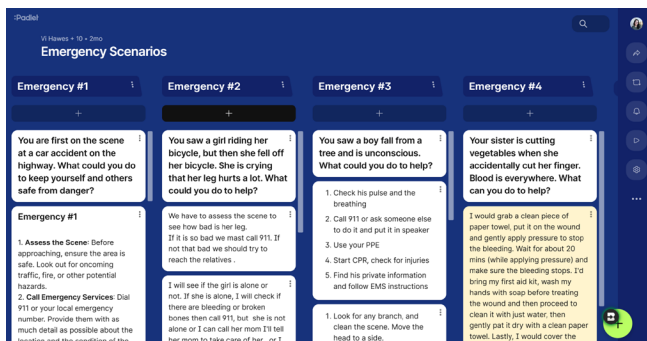
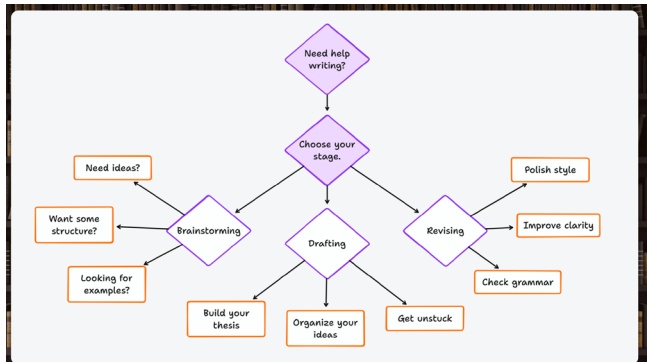


FIGURE 4



- 3. Interactive Reflections:** Educators can use Sandbox walls for reflective exercises by prompting students to share their thoughts on a topic of the lesson. A teacher might ask learners to post one thing they learned during a session on financial literacy and one question they still have.
- 4. Collaborative Problem-Solving:** In an ABE Math class, instructors could use Sandbox to present word problems where students collaboratively post solutions step-by-step using text boxes or drawings.

These examples highlight how Sandbox not only replicates but expands upon Jamboard's functionality by offering more organizational and multimedia integration.

Benefits of Using Padlet

One of the most significant advantages of Padlet is its ease of use, which allows both educators and students to quickly adapt without requiring extensive training (Nozaki, 2023). Educators can set up walls effortlessly while students find it intuitive to navigate and contribute their thoughts through various formats such as text or multimedia. This ease of use is particularly beneficial in adult education settings where learners may have varying levels of digital literacy.

Another key benefit is collaborative learning. The platform enables real-time interaction between students and educators through shared walls where participants can post ideas or resources simultaneously (Naamati-Schneider & Alt, 2023). This collaborative environment fosters peer-to-peer learning and helps build a sense of community within the classroom. In adult education—where many learners may feel isolated or disconnected, this sense of belonging can be crucial for engagement and retention.

Padlet also supports multiple input formats, making it highly adaptable to different learning styles. Whether students prefer writing text responses or sharing visual content like images or videos, Padlet accommodates these preferences seamlessly (Kim, 2023). This versatility ensures that learners with diverse strengths can engage with the material in ways that suit them best.

The introduction of the Sandbox feature further enhances Padlet's appeal by offering an alternative for educators transitioning from Google Jamboard. With Jamboard being discontinued at the end of the year, many teachers are searching for a tool that offers similar functionality. Sandbox not only replicates many of Jamboard's features but also allows users to import existing Jamboards into Padlet without losing content or structure. This seamless transition ensures that educators can continue using their established materials without disruption.

Finally, Padlet's ability to facilitate real-time interaction adds another layer of engagement for learners (Phenwan, 2023). Whether used during live classes or asynchronous activities, this immediacy helps maintain momentum in discussions and encourages spontaneous collaboration.

Challenges of Using Padlet

Despite its many strengths, Padlet has some limitations that educators must consider carefully before fully integrating it into their teaching practices. Below are key challenges along with strategies to address them:

1. Technical Issues

One notable drawback is the reliance on stable internet access. Learners in rural or underserved areas may face connectivity challenges, which can hinder their ability to participate consistently. For instance, during a collaborative brainstorming session, students with poor internet connections might experience delays in posting or viewing updates on the wall, leading to frustration. To mitigate this issue, educators can encourage students to prepare offline drafts of their contributions and upload them when they have access to a stable connection. Additionally, exporting Padlet walls as PDFs or images can ensure that students without consistent access still have access to the shared content.

2. Cluttered Walls

As more content is added over time—especially in larger classes—Padlet walls can become cluttered and difficult to navigate. This can overwhelm both students and instructors, reducing the tool’s effectiveness. Some examples of organizational strategy can include categories or columns. Instruct students to post within designated columns or sections based on specific prompts or topics (e.g., separate columns for “Questions,” “Reflections,” and “Resources”). Setting post guidelines can limit the number of posts per student or require concise contributions to prevent overcrowding. Lastly, any old walls can be archived. Regularly archiving completed activities by exporting walls into PDFs or images for future reference while keeping active walls clean and focused can help with organization.

3. Limited Feedback Mechanisms

While Padlet excels at fostering collaboration, it lacks robust tools for providing detailed feedback on individual contributions (Nadeem, 2021). This limitation can make it difficult for instructors to assess student work beyond surface-level interactions. When using Padlet, pair it with other tools designed for grading or feedback, such as Google Classroom or Canvas. For example, after a brainstorming session on Padlet, an instructor could export the wall and

provide individualized feedback through comments in a learning management system.

4. Cost Considerations

While Padlet offers a free version, its paid version unlocks advanced features such as unlimited walls and enhanced customization options. This cost may be prohibitive for some educators or institutions with tight budgets. A potential strategy includes educators maximizing the free version by reusing walls for multiple activities (e.g., clearing old content after exporting it) or collaborating with colleagues to share a single paid account for departmental use.

• Managing Collaboration at Scale

Effective collaboration management can be challenging in large classes or workshops, especially when multiple groups are working simultaneously on different tasks. Examples of collaborative strategies include using the breakout room integration mentioned previously. Sandbox allows educators to create unique links for each breakout group in video conference platforms like Zoom. Each group receives its own copy of the Sandbox wall to work on independently without interference from other groups. Another strategy to manage collaboration effectively is to take advantage of QR code sharing. Sandbox generates QR codes that students can scan to access their assigned walls instantly. This feature simplifies joining walls during in-person activities, such as group discussions or brainstorming sessions in hybrid classrooms.

Conclusion

Padlet offers a powerful solution for enhancing student engagement and collaboration in adult education. Its user-friendly interface and flexible format make it easy for educators to integrate into their teaching practices quickly. The recent addition of the Sandbox feature provides an excellent alternative for those transitioning from Google Jamboard by allowing them to import existing materials seamlessly while maintaining much of Jamboard’s functionality. However, as with any tool, it’s important not only to recognize its strengths but also to acknowledge potential limitations such as technical challenges related primarily to connectivity issues or difficulties managing large volumes of content effectively within shared spaces and online environments alike.

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