

Let's Get Social

The Educator's Guide
to Edmodo

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Introduction

Certain ideas can be used as tools to think with over a lifetime.

–Seymour Papert, *Mindstorms: Children, Computers and Powerful Ideas*

There is no tool like a tool whose time has come. Those of us interested in technology and education stand at a unique moment in history, where many of the original dreams about the ways technology could be used as a tool to transform classrooms, education, and our children's lives are within our reach. The proliferation of mobile computing and that little network of interconnected devices we call the internet offers the promise of making the world a bit smaller and more personal, making kids feel part of a powerful community that they proudly feel they have a hand in creating. But how do we help our students keep an even footing with their **digital footprints** on this new terrain, especially when it is terrain they feel they know so well that they needn't be careful? How do we help students use this dizzying array of new tools in focused, organized ways that empower them and engender the critical skills they will need for their lifetime? And how do we, as teachers, organize our own use of the internet to find greater focus in our professional lives and to help us inspire (*and be inspired*) by each other's best practices? How can we teach our students to take advantage of this wellspring of information and connectivity without it taking advantage of them?

Hello, World ... Meet Edmodo

Edmodo is one powerful answer. Like any good mission, Edmodo's is simply stated. Its goal is to "connect every learner with the people and resources they need to reach their potential" (edmodo.com/about, 2014). It is certainly not the only one, but Edmodo is by far the largest **educational social network** on earth and is flexible and robust enough to help unite many of these tools at our disposal for the betterment of our children, as well as for renewing and enriching our professional practices.

This book is intended to guide teachers, administrators, and parents to jumpstart (or expand) their successful integration of Edmodo into a learning environment. It is meant for both novices and veterans because, like Edmodo itself, this book has a low floor and a high ceiling, with easily accessible information yet lots of potential for even the experienced user to grow and learn new “hacks.”

Our Experience

This look at the potentials of Edmodo is drawn from our own experience as well as the direct voices of hundreds of educators who share how this powerful educational social network can be used to supercharge the classroom experience and deepen learning and teaching.

More than two decades ago, our teaching careers began just at the advent of the World Wide Web. We were among the first internet-age technology trainers for the Los Angeles Unified School District, and so we guided classroom teachers in creating web presences in raw **HTML** and with early rudimentary **web editors**. We were inspired by the possibility these early web tools afforded teachers and students to express ideas and connect with one another, but it took a while for the tools to truly catch up with the aspiration.

In the past 20 years, we have worked in schools in five different countries helping to guide learning communities to maximize possibilities of technology for learning. As early adopters of Edmodo, we have been pleased to watch its expansion. Having led teachers and parents through the process of adopting Edmodo across learning communities, we have had the opportunity to use it in a variety of professional and personal capacities: as classroom teachers; as administrators, technology coaches, and directors; and as parents. In addition to using Edmodo with students in classrooms, we have also had the benefit of enriching our own **professional learning networks** through interactions with other teachers and administrators in the online community. This is truly an exciting time for all of us in education. Now, with the widespread proliferation of classroom access to devices and the worldwide expansion of Edmodo, those initial aspirations are finally at all of our fingertips.

Using This Book

Edmodo can be used in a variety of ways, and there are clear benefits for all members of the learning community, all of which this book explores. In short, students gain the digital-age skill sets they need in a fun and safe environment. For teachers, Edmodo can help organize and enrich instruction and assessment; it can be a communication link among students, administration, and parents; and it can offer incredible opportunities for professional development. For administrators, Edmodo can be an important tool for facilitating greater communication and transparency in your learning community. Parents can use Edmodo to get a unique look into their children's classroom experience and be more informed about assignments and the general rhythm of classroom life.

The book also shows how Edmodo can be used as an instructional tool. We consider how it offers our classrooms a powerful way to integrate with a host of existing trends in education. From **project-based learning** and role-playing to **differentiated learning**, Edmodo can integrate seamlessly with many existing **class management systems** and instructional strategies. For those exploring the benefits of **gamification**, Edmodo offers a host of possibilities both with its available gamified apps and within the Edmodo interface itself, which can easily be leveraged as a role-playing/simulation tool and gamified space. Edmodo is also a powerful hub for the flipped or **blended classroom** as well as for a more traditional classroom enhanced with technology use.

Finally, we share how to create extensive professional learning networks using Edmodo to ask targeted questions, share your knowledge, find relevant resources, and create an extended network of colleagues with whom you can learn and expand together.

Features

Regardless of whether you are new to Edmodo or are an experienced user intent on expanding and maximizing your current use, you will benefit from the tips and techniques shared throughout the book, as well as the inspirational stories from other Edmodo users. The book offers the following features, each indicated with an icon:



Tales from the Trail

These inspiring quotes, stories, and ideas from real educators describe how Edmodo is currently benefiting their students and teaching practices.



Bright Ideas for All

These specific tips on smartly integrating Edmodo and making the most use of its varied features are helpful for newer users or those who want a refresher course.



Tips for the Power User

These tips are intended for experienced users who are ready to supercharge their Edmodo skills and take their practice to the next level.



How-to Directions

For both new and experienced users, these step-by-step directions help break down the steps necessary for easy navigation of Edmodo's many features.

Rounding out the book is a glossary for any unfamiliar or new-to-you terms. These terms appear in bold through the text and can be found in the glossary, which begins on page 113.

We begin now by introducing Edmodo and outlining the myriad of benefits teachers and students all around the globe are experiencing when they use this powerful tool. New users and those wanting a refresher will benefit from Chapter 2, which provides an orientation to the Edmodo interface. More seasoned users can skip ahead to the following chapters, which provide practical advice on integrating Edmodo and using it to its full potential.

Let the adventure begin!