

*Instrumental Music Educator Participation in Discussion Forums within
Online Learning Communities*

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine how instrumental music educators made use of general discussion boards in online learning communities. Reasons for posts include: (a) opinion; (b) question/clarification about coursework; (c) question about other topics; (d) encouragement; (e) sharing of information beyond the coursework; or (f) answering questions beyond the coursework. Data from existing posts were gathered from general discussion boards. In addition, instrumental music teachers were asked to complete an online survey based on their perceptions of the open discussions available in the online learning community. Survey responses revealed information on: (a) the benefits of general discussion boards; (b) instructional ideas and techniques that were learned from general discussion boards; (c) networking and collaborations that were established as a result of general discussion boards. Participants' responses share personal reflections on the quality and benefits of online general discussion boards. Information gathered will assist online instructors as they encourage students to participate in more conversations via open discussion forums and to form wider personal networks, sharing ideas and successful teaching strategies, and to collaborate in research beyond the requirements of the online class.

Keywords: distance learning, online learning community, networking, collaboration,
instrumental music educators