

For this assignment, we were asked to join and participate in an online community. At first glance, the goal of this project was quite daunting. How could I, a student teacher, possibly make a positive contribution to an established online educational community? As with many experiments, the only way to find out was to try.

At the beginning of the semester, I browsed the options for educational communities, even followed a few topics, but had a hard time deciding on which one to commit to. The first community I tried was Edutopia. I read a couple articles and responded to them, but my responses didn't seem to become part of the conversation. It seems to me that Edutopia is a community where experienced educators give advice and input, then other experienced educators chime in and expand the discussion. Soon after I joined, I decided to look elsewhere.

Throughout the semester, I have been observing the TED-Ed online community. In mid-October, I was charged with taking over a class for my mentor teacher who had to take unexpected leave. I was scouring the internet for lesson plans and came across the TED-Ed Lessons page. This portion of the community offers lesson plans based on everyday YouTube videos as well as videos created specifically for the TED-Ed community. By creating an account, I was able to save the lessons I found useful and refer to them later on. These lessons include critical thinking questions, discussion topics, and prompts that can inspire further research. Later on, I created a few lessons of my own, one based off my digital story and one based off an existing TED-Ed lesson.

While the lessons are very useful for classroom activities, the real benefits came when I joined the TED-Ed Community discussions chat board. My profile within the community, which includes a list of the discussions I have initiated and participated in, can be found [here](#). Recent

topics on this discussion board include scientific questions, foreign language incorporation, and classroom suggestions.

The first post I felt comfortable responding to was for a marine science-based topic. I am a big fan of water and all the life in it, so I try to gather as much knowledge as possible. Some subsequent discussions I have participated in are “What do you think of social media?” and “Encouraging introverted students”. My replies for both topics seem to have been controversial within the discussion board, though after posting these replies I received an invitation from a TED-Ed employee to co-moderate a TED-Ed Chat on Twitter.

Thus far, I have enjoyed being a part of the TED-Ed community. In the past few weeks, I have found myself eager to read responses to my questions and replies. I have learned a lot from this experience, receiving responses that were confidence-boosters as well as a few that felt like slap-in-the-face wake up calls. I plan on continuing my involvement on these discussion boards after this semester is over, and I hope to remain a valuable member of the TED-Ed Community for many years to come.