Foreword

The focus of the *Handbook of Research on Active Learning and the Flipped Classroom Model in the Digital Age* is on how digital technologies and educational strategies such as flipped classrooms can be used to design, facilitate, and direct active and collaborative learning experiences for students. Sustained collaboration in the construction and confirmation of knowledge represents a new era in educational practice. The New Media Consortium and the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative’s 2015 Horizon Report identifies how the “work of students is increasingly seen as collaborative by nature . . . the emergence of a raft of new (and often free) tools has made active learning and collaboration easier than at any other point in history” (p. 4). They identify collaboration and communication as a significant trend in expanding the possibilities for learning and creativity. A significant driver of this transformation in learning has been the emergence of social media technologies.

These technologies present exciting opportunities but the challenge is in understanding the educational design and pedagogical issues associated with the best use of social media tools such as blogs, wikis, online communities, and synchronous communication technologies (e.g., *Adobe Connect*). This *Handbook of Research on Active Learning and the Flipped Classroom Model in the Digital Age* provides evidence-based strategies for effectively and efficiently using social media applications to support active and collaborative learning experiences for students.

Education is experiencing a transformative shift from issues of accessing and sharing information to designing active and collaborative learning environments where participants are actively engaged in deep and meaningful learning (Vaughan, Cleveland-Innes, & Garrison, 2013). Social media applications are about using the web in a way that capitalizes on its greatest asset – bringing people together in learning communities; communities where participants (students and teachers in the case of education) with a common interest can interact and collaborate on purposeful activities for the benefit of all. Brown and Adler (2008) argue that the capabilities of social media tools have “shifted attention from access to information toward access to people” (p. 18). These applications are allowing people to come together in active and collaborative learning communities.

The historical ideal of higher education has been to learn in active and collaborative learning communities (Lipman, 1991). The chapters in the *Handbook of Research on Active Learning and the Flipped Classroom Model in the Digital Age* provide evidence of the potential of using social media technologies and educational strategies such as flipped classrooms to recapture this vision, even in large, introductory undergraduate courses. The key is to redesign our courses for active and collaborative learning experiences that enable students to take responsibility for their learning and validate their understanding through discourse and debate with their peers.

*Norman D. Vaughan*

*Mount Royal University, Calgary, Alberta, Canada*
Norman Vaughan is a Professor in the Department of Education at Mount Royal University in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. He has co-authored the books Teaching in Blended Learning Environments: Creating and Sustaining Communities of Inquiry (2013) and Blended Learning in Higher Education (2008) and he has published a series of articles on blended learning and faculty development. Dr. Vaughan is the Co-founder of the Blended Online Design Network (BOLD), a member of the Community of Inquiry Research Group, the Associate Editor of the International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning and he is on the Editorial Boards of numerous national and international journals.

REFERENCES


