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To: TEACHING-TOOLBOX@LISTSERV.JMU.EDU
Subject: Teaching Toolbox: Flipping the Classroom (Part 1)
Date: Thursday, January 30, 2020 11:22:54 AM

Flipping the Classroom (Part 1)

by Joshua Rashon Streeter

“Flipping the classroom” has become a common practice at the college level. In the article “[An Examination of the Flipped Classroom Approach on College Student Academic Involvement](#)” (2015), the McCallum et al. argue that the flipped classroom approach is a way to engage students, which leads to enhanced student learning. The study found that there was an increased relationship between peers in the classroom, as well as increased involvement from the instructor and more positive interactions between the student and teacher ([McCallum et al. 2015](#)).

There is a growing body of research on the use of flipped instruction with the current college student population (see “[Understanding Generation Z Students to Promote a Contemporary Learning Environment](#)” [2017], and [Generation Z Goes to College](#) [2016]). At the moment, college students are “challenging the traditional classroom teaching structure, and faculty are realizing that traditional classroom teaching is no longer effective with these students” ([Skiba and Barton 2006](#)). For this reason, flipping the classroom is a growing practice in university teaching across disciplines.

What is flipped instruction?

Compared to direct instruction, flipped instruction considers the student's role in the learning process by providing space for active and guided learning within a larger sequence of learning tasks to master a concept ([Talbert 2017](#)).

Flipped learning can be defined as:

a pedagogical approach in which instruction moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space, and the resulting group space is transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter. ([Flipped Learning Network 2014](#))

The flipped classroom is built upon several educational origins of student centered-learning, including experiential, problem-based, peer-assisted, and active and collaborative learning ([Bishop and Verleger 2013](#)). The central aspect of each of these types of learning is [constructivism](#). Constructivism is a learning theory that “emphasizes how individuals interact with their environment (the people and materials) in the learning process to make meaning” with a focus on how “an individual co-constructs idea with others in the environment and then translates their discoveries into individual learning” ([Dawson and Lee 2018, 370](#)).

Why use flipped instruction?

Flipped instruction considers how to engage students in the *process* of learning. Due to the [scaffolded](#) and connected series of events, there is a “carry over” and “connection” between what students sometimes see as disparate events. Also, flipped instruction helps students take responsibility for their learning ([McCallum et al. 2015](#)). The connection between in- and out-of-class activities or learning tasks puts the ownership on the student to do the homework, attend class, and participate fully. For example, one active learning strategy I use in my own class after students read a chapter of the textbook for homework is [visual mapping](#). This strategy asks students to collaboratively map concepts by organizing main ideas and details from the reading. The students then identify the key points from the reading and decide how they relate to each other, instead of the instructor going over this information via lecture.

Flipped instruction also offers the instructor an opportunity to use “[formative assessment](#).” Formative assessment is used during the process of learning (compared to at the end of learning, known as “summative assessment”). Flipped instruction uses formative assessment by allowing the student to try out, test, apply, or wrestle with the concept that they are learning through an activity or task in and out of class. This helps the instructor to know where the students are at in their mastery of the concept and what the appropriate next steps might be, for everyone.

The flipped classroom has several shortcomings, such as time for instructor planning and preparation and banking upon student preparedness. However, if an instructor would like to focus on student-centered learning and to find ways to increase student engagement and motivation, flipped instruction is a proven way to help students meet educational objectives and form connections between out-of-class and in-class activities.

To be continued...

Look for a future Teaching Toolbox this semester on planning and implementing flipped instruction.

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