



A Flipped Classroom Approach Can Invigorate Instructors and Students

“Bueller? Bueller? Bueller?” Most people are likely aware of the iconic “Bueller?” scene from the 1986 film, *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off*, when the monotone, high school instructor takes attendance for a less than enthusiastic classroom of learners. While entertaining, the movie touches on a scenario many instructors may not want to confront: Learning and teaching is not always exciting. In fact, learning and teaching can be at times uninteresting and monotonous. How can instructors reinvigorate the same content they teach semester after semester, year after year? As a communication instructor for 15 years, I realized that if I was getting bored in my classroom, then my students might also be bored. So, I asked myself, “How can I solve this boredom issue?”

I discovered that the root of the boredom problem was not the content I was teaching—the study of communication—but rather, my method for delivering the content. For example, even though I thought I was presenting course material in an engaging way by using interesting PowerPoints for visual aids, I was still predominately lecturing, which can be tedious for me and my students. I asked myself another question, which was “How can I use my well-crafted PowerPoint slides without having a lot of ‘Bueller’ moments?” The answer to this question became clear when I noticed more instructors embracing the flipped classroom approach. While most college instructors have heard of flipped classrooms, many instructors still teach in ways that are comfortable to them. The flipped classroom, however, is worth implementing for a variety of reasons.

Flipped Classroom Approach

A flipped classroom involves introducing content to learners outside of the classroom—often online—and then reinforcing the content in the classroom. A flipped classroom moves activities, including those that may have traditionally been considered homework, into the classroom. With the flipped classroom approach, instructors prerecord video lectures and assign those lectures as homework so students learn the content before the corresponding classroom activity. One of the core objectives of a flipped classroom is to move students away from passive learning and toward active learning where students engage in collaborative and critical-thinking activities.

In my experience, the flipped classroom approach frees up valuable time during class for students to

process the content in more meaningful and creative ways. Instead of only presenting the course material by lecturing with PowerPoint slides, I now also incorporate classroom activities such as role playing, group collaboration, problem-solving games, and case studies.

Examples of Flipped Classroom Activities

Whole-Classroom Activity

When I teach my students about communication in the workplace, I assign research for students to study prior to class. The research is about how experts suggest job seekers respond to commonly-asked interview questions. I then have students participate in an in-classroom activity called, “How to Win the Interview (or Not!).” I provide students with worksheets containing commonly asked job interview questions. Students have to develop strategic answers to these questions based on the research they were assigned prior to class. By participating in the class activity, students engage with the content and apply their new knowledge about how to answer interview questions.

Student Groups

During a flipped classroom group activity, each student brings his or her own individual understanding of the content to the lesson, and together, in small groups, students are able to draw from each other’s knowledge and understanding of the material to forge new understandings and better recall the content.

I like to use the flipped classroom approach to teach students about resume writing. Before the classroom activity, students are required to independently study guidelines and suggestions for effective resumes. During class, students work in groups to write effective resumes for an imaginary job seeker. In contrast to lectures—the original way I taught students about resume writing—the flipped classroom approach provides students with hands-on experience that keeps students engaged with the course content. The collaborative resume writing activity has resulted in more professional individual student resumes, which is a required writing assignment in my class.

Another way I incorporate a collaborative flipped classroom activity is when I teach students how to use visual aids to create effective presentations. Students are assigned to watch a prerecorded video lecture outside of class about how to create effective visual aids for presentations. When students attend the following

class, they are placed into groups and are required to create mini presentations on a variety of topics while implementing what they have learned about effective visual aids. Following this collaborative activity, students create more effective individual presentations, therefore demonstrating their comprehension of the lesson.

Across Disciplines

The flipped classroom approach can be applied across many disciplines. One of the psychology instructors at Nash Community College assigns students to watch a prerecorded video lecture about psychological disorders before attending the corresponding class time. The instructor then reinforces the content with a simple in-classroom game. During the game, students place sticky notes about psychological disorders on their foreheads. Students have to ask their peers questions in order to figure out which disorder has been posted on their foreheads. By using the flipped classroom approach, students learn about psychological disorders before class and then apply their learning during the interactive game. I have also seen math instructors flip their classrooms by requiring students to watch prerecorded lectures beforehand and use class time for applying the newly learned content by playing mathematical games and working in peer groups on assigned tasks.

Conclusion

A flipped classroom approach has reinvigorated my classroom, and I am rediscovering my joy for teaching. Applying the flipped classroom approach in my classes has increased my students' critical-thinking skills and their retention of course content. More importantly, however, I have witnessed my students having fun while they are learning. I recently had a student approach me after a flipped classroom exercise and say, "I can't believe an hour and a half just passed; that was so much fun!"

Ashley Berry, *Instructor, Communication*

For further information, contact the author at Nash Community College, 522 North Old Carriage Road, Rocky Mount, NC 27804. Email: amber351@nashcc.edu

"Flipped Learning: Pathway to Student Success" is one of the outstanding workshops now available from NISOD. Visit www.nisod.org/workshops for the full list of available workshops.