



Three Teaching Strategies to Use Today

To engage students, instructors must do more than lecture; they must provide students with opportunities to engage deeply with the course content. When students are actively engaged, they focus on the new information being presented. The following three teaching strategies are strategies I have used in the classroom that actively engage students in learning the course material.

Virtual Field Trip

During my sophomore year in college at William Paterson University, I remember taking a field trip in my Macroeconomics course. My class took a bus into New York City and toured the New York Federal Reserve Bank (NYFRB), and afterwards toured the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE). While touring the NYSE and the NYFRB I was able to visualize the economic theories I learned about in class. Following the field trip, I changed my major from general business to economics.

It would be a great experience for my class to visit the Atlanta Federal Reserve Bank. However, because of a lack of funding, we are unable to do so. So instead, I created a virtual field trip for my students. Regardless of the discipline, any instructor can create an engaging virtual field trip. A virtual field trip is a digital exploration based on a specific theme or place, such as the solar system, parts of the body, or federal government buildings. A virtual field trip is a pre-organized collection of images and information sourced online and presented as a computer-based learning experience. Virtual field trips transport students “outside” of the classroom and expose them to new experiences. The experiences help students make connections between what they learn in the classroom and real-life occurrences.

Instructors can create their own virtual field trips using PowerPoint or Prezi, and can act as the “location guide” while informing students about specific places or topics. Instructors can also purchase virtual field trips online from organizations and museums. To help make virtual field trips more interactive, instructors can integrate activities and discussions and share props and artifacts throughout the experience. I use PowerPoint to create a virtual field trip to send my students on a journey to each of the 12 regional Federal Reserve banks spread out across the country. I use images and videos to help students feel like they are actually visiting the banks.

Web Quest

A web quest is a virtual scavenger hunt where students are assigned questions relevant to the course content and are required to find answers by using the internet while in class. A web quest is an investigative activity that makes students think critically about the questions they are asked and the sources where they obtain their answers. In my experience, students are interested in and engaged with the course content when participating in a web quest because they learn through a self-directed search instead of simply listening to a lecture. In most cases, a web quest is followed by a class discussion during which students evaluate their and their peers’ answers and debate which ones are correct. Following the discussion, the instructor shares the correct answers.

During my economics courses, I use web quests to help students locate the correct information about current inflation rates. For example, many websites post various inflation rates, but most of the time, these websites are inaccurate. For the inflation rate web quest, students learn about why there are many different sources with different inflation rates and about the importance of using reputable resources on the internet. After the web quest is completed, the students and I discuss the results.

Flipped-Classroom

The flipped classroom allows for improved use of class time through various instructional strategies. In the flipped-classroom approach, students complete pre-class preparatory work, often in the form of short, online videos or readings, which are designed to promote students’ understanding of the content. Face-to-face class time is then focused on problem solving, application of learning, and collaborating with peers. The flipped model approach encourages classroom participation that otherwise would be less likely to occur, primarily because students become familiar with the course material prior to class and therefore feel more comfortable participating in classroom discussions.

In my class, students are assigned chapter readings and chapter quizzes prior to each class. Then, while in class, I use various strategies like real-life case studies to help students think deeper and apply the information they learned prior to class.

Evaluating Teaching Strategies

If you are anything like me, you feel creatively fulfilled and incredibly overwhelmed after attending education conferences, such as NISOD’s International Conference on Teaching and Leadership Excellence. You take good

notes, attend engaging sessions, make new connections, network with others in your field, and have the best intentions to make your classes better when you return home. Something that many educators experience after learning new strategies is a lack of time to implement them into their courses. Due to time limitations, I like to test one engagement strategy per semester, which gives me sufficient time to properly evaluate its effectiveness. At the end of the semester, I then make the decision whether to continue using the strategy or to introduce a new strategy the following semester.

Conclusion

When students are actively engaged in their learning, they process and retain more information than when they passively listen to a lecture. When instructors design activities like those mentioned above that promote student engagement, they reinforce learning, keep students interested and on task, and making learning relevant and fun.

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