Flipping Your Classroom for Maximum Student Engagement

The idea of the flipped classroom was popularized in 2004 by math teacher Salmon Kahn and in 2007 by two chemistry teachers, Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams as a way to increase student learning in challenging math and science courses. You might consider flipping your classroom as a way to maximize student engagement and minimize lecture in your first-year student success courses.

What is a flipped classroom? Flipping the classroom involves rearranging the typical events in a classroom. In a typical college classroom, students are given reading assignments (which they seldom complete) and then attend lectures where faculty often repeat the content of the reading materials. This traditional model is a disincentive for students to read college textbooks and results in minimal student engagement. For students who have completed the reading assignments before class, the lecture is a repeat of material they have already read. Because material from the reading assignment is often repeated in the lectures, many students see no need to buy a textbook or read it.

In the flipped classroom model, students are given reading assignments which **must be completed before class begins.**  Then during class time, faculty can engage students with interactive activities that help students practice and apply the material learned, provide opportunities for collaborative learning, add additional material, or review the highlights prior to group activities on the topic.

Of course, there must be incentives for students to actually read their textbooks for this model to work. This can easily be accomplished by using technology readily available to college faculty. To assure that students have read the assignments, they can be required to take a short quiz or complete journal entries which are submitted to Blackboard or other course management systems **before class begins**. Grades on these quizzes or journal entries would have be a significant portion of a student’s grades. The process can be automated by using quizzes that can be mechanically scored and the results posted in the grade book of the course management system. Materials can be supplemented with online discussion boards, blogs or other social media. It in this model, it is suggested that part of the grade include class participation so that students do not opt out of this important component of the course.

What are some of the advantages for students and faculty of using the flipped classroom in first-year student courses?

Students:

* are more actively engaged in learning.
* assume more responsibility for their own learning.
* have more opportunity to participate in groups and learn from one another.
* Get in the habit of pre-reading their college textbooks which is critical for more challenging courses they will encounter in college.

Faculty:

* are available to provide guidance and feedback in the classroom where it is most effective.
* change roles from lecturer to a coach or guide.
* are freed from delivering repetitive classroom lectures, often to several sections of the same course.
* have additional time for collaborative learning and social interaction.
* move from covering the material to mastering it.

In first-year courses, you can repurpose your traditional materials, design new ones or a combination of both. With this new model, the quality, clarity, and interactivity of the textbook become more important so that students can adequately prepare for class. Some material may be developed for use online or existing online materials can be used. Publishers are beginning to offer quality interactive online materials that fit well with the flipped classroom model. (See an example below)

In an article titled “How the Flipped Classroom is Radically Transforming Learning,” Jonathan Bergman and Aaron Sams describe how this new model has transformed learning in their classrooms:

Some might ask how we developed a culture of learning.  We think the key is for students to identify learning as their goal, instead of striving for the completion of assignments.  We have purposely tried to make our classes places where students carry out meaningful activities instead of completing busy work.  When we respect our students in this way, they usually respond.  They begin to realize, and for some it takes time, that we are here to guide them in their learning instead of being the authoritative pedagogue.  Our goal is for them to be the best learner possible, and to truly understand the content in our classes.  When our students grasp the concept that we are on their side, they respond by doing their best.

If you have questions about flipping your first-year college success course or about materials available, you can contact me at: [marsha@marshafralick.com](mailto:marsha@marshafralick.com)

Resources:

The University of Texas at Austin has a brief online introduction, including a one minute video, on “[How to Flip a Class](http://ctl.utexas.edu/teaching/flipping-a-class/how).”

”[How the Flipped Classroom is Radically Transforming Learning](http://www.thedailyriff.com/articles/how-the-flipped-classroom-is-radically-transforming-learning-536.php)” by Jonathan Bergman and Aaron Sams

For interactive materials for engaging students, see my Instructor Manual at [www.collegesuccess1.com](http://www.collegesuccess1.com)