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The Best Teaching Advice I Have Received

Kenneth L. Alford

What makes some teachers more effective than others?

Throughout my teaching career, I have asked numerous colleagues, mentors, and associates for their advice regarding excellent teaching. At the 2019 Teaching Professor Conference in New Orleans, I had the opportunity to share some of the advice I have gleaned during the past 40 years from outstanding professors. Here is a sampling of the advice I shared:

- **Be kind.** This is the advice I have received the most often from great teachers. Being kind doesn't mean being a pushover or watering down your content or academic standards, but it does mean following the Golden Rule when interacting in any way with students.
- **Let students get to know you.** Students sometimes appear shocked to learn that faculty members have personal lives and interests outside of the classroom. Help your students get to know who you are and a bit about your life's journey. The first day of class is a great time to begin. It's easier to learn from someone you know and trust.
- **Help students get to know each other.** At the same time, teachers can help students get to know each other as well, starting from the first week. As one colleague told me, "I think it's a bit sad that most students are willing to sit next to someone for three to four months and never learn their name." Many students won't engage with one another in class unless you encourage them to do so.
- **Lighten up a little.** It's easy to take ourselves too seriously. Be willing to laugh with your students when it's appropriate. Self-deprecating humor can be an excellent way to connect with your students. Humor can also be a useful way to manage some of the frustrations that can accompany teaching. A few years ago, one of my colleagues—after being asked for the umpteenth time at the end of a semester whether he would raise a student's grade—sent the following email message to his students. It let them know that the answer was no but offered them an opportunity to smile at the same time. Here's what he sent:

  Dear students,

  I don't know why, but I'm getting an abundance of emails from students explaining to me that they are 1 point short of an "A," and that if I don't give them that one point, they will: (1) lose their scholarship, (2) get kicked out of their apartment, (3) forfeit their chances for medical school, (4) get cut from the Rugby team, (5) not be able to get married this June, or (6) have to work in a coal mine all summer.

Hey, it's okay! Just take a chill pill and relax. A hot shower and a full plate of Pad Thai chicken will do you some good. Chase that down with a slurpee. I don't even care what flavor that slurpee is—just don't make it a blue one. Blue ones jack up your teeth.

Look . . . if you put $100 in a savings account, you cannot draw out $101—you will be overdrawn. Likewise, if you earned an "A–," I cannot give you an "A" just for kicks.

I promise: Life will go on, you will graduate from college, you will work in honorable professions, and best of all, you will still drive all your children to soccer practice in a really nice minivan. Life is going to be great.

I have a hard time believing that this class is going to determine your future salary and potential for winning a Nobel Prize, much less who you marry, or if you will live in a nice home.

Cheer up. Eat some ice cream. Live a little! You can do this! But don't lose any more sleep over an "A" or "A–"! Get some perspective! You will live to see another day! But, that's just me. Sorry for the rant, but man, did that feel good.

I love you all!

- **Be straightforward with students.** No one likes to be the bearer of bad news, but you don't do yourself or your students any favors if you downplay or withhold important information from them. If a student is in danger of failing your course, for example, you need to ensure that they clearly understand their situation.
- **Capitalize on your strengths.** Don't try to copy others. Be yourself.
- **Always be learning.** We live in an amazing time. Knowledge is moving forward on all fronts. Teachers have an obligation to continue learning. As one of my colleagues explained, "If there are few eureka moments for the teacher, there will be even fewer of those moments for their students." You should be on the lookout for opportunities to learn *from* your students too.
- **Admit when you don't know something.** Never try to bluff. It's a fact that you won't always know the answer to every question you might be asked. Let students know that you will try to find the answer. Then, once you find it, teach your students how you did so. It can be extremely valuable for students to understand *how* questions can be answered. Equally important, if you can't find the answer, let students know that as well.
- **Front-load relevance.** Too often teachers seem to wait until the end of a lesson to put the pieces together for students. They sometimes act as if they are pulling back an imaginary curtain and saying, "Ta-da! Here's how everything fits together!" That doesn't work as well with the current generation of college students as it may have in years past. Today's students want to understand the big picture up front—not wait until the end.

- **Watch others teach.** Whether it's negative or positive, you can always learn something from watching others teach. Take the time to visit the classrooms of other teachers and talk with them about their teaching successes and failures.
- **Borrow appropriately from other teachers.** One of my teaching mentors taught me that it's okay to borrow from other teachers if you do so with love and their permission. In fact, if we're not sharing with each other, we're all doing more work than necessary.
- **Learn to ask good questions.** Questions that ask only *who*, *what*, or *when* don't requirement much engagement from students. Generally, the questions that matter the most begin with *why* or *how*.
- **"Right-size" your course, your lessons and exams, and your assignments.** Don't try to cram as much as you can into each lesson, exam, or assignment. You can't squeeze two hours of instruction into a 50-minute class, no matter how hard you try or how fast you talk. If you add 10 minutes of content to a lesson, you've also got to remove 10 minutes from that lesson.
- **Bad day? Shake it off!** Every teacher has lessons that "just didn't work"—even if the same lesson to similar students worked the hour before. Learn from the experience, figure out what might be improved, and then move on.
- **Show them, help them, watch them, let them.** Teaching can often be viewed as a kind of progression in which the role the teacher plays gradually diminishes. You might think of this process something like this: it begins with *show them* (100 percent teacher effort), transitions into *help them* (75 percent teacher, 25 percent student), progresses to *watch them* (25 percent teacher, 75 percent student), and concludes with *let them* (100 percent student effort).
- **Consider next semester when preparing this semester.** Too many teachers are in such a rush to prepare for the coming semester that they don't take the time to generalize their preparation—so they end up doing just as much work the following semester too. Instead, look for ways to reuse lesson plans, schedules, syllabi, assignments, and exam questions instead of reinventing the wheel every term.
- **Share more stories.** Stories are powerful and extremely flexible. They can be used to illustrate, explain, entertain, compare, contrast, and reinforce. Stories can enable you to teach without it being obvious that you're doing so. Share more stories!
- **Remember, it is an honor to teach . . . and it should be fun.**

When it comes to teaching, the bottom line is that there is always room for each of us to improve. What two ideas from this list might you investigate further?

Interactive Lecturing: A Pedagogy of Engagement That Works

Claire Major

Lecture as a pedagogical approach has come under considerable fire in recent years. Indeed, critics have called lectures boring, obsolete, old-fashioned, overused, and even unfair, among other, less-flattering terms. The criticisms, however, have most often been leveled at one type of lecture: the full-class-session, transmission-model lecture. And it is fair to say that delivering a 50- to 75-minute nonstop lecture is not the best pedagogical approach.

But there is another type of lecture, one that my colleague Elizabeth Barkley and I described in detail in our recent book, and it's called interactive lecturing (Barkley & Major, 2018). Interactive lecturing is a model for combining engaging presentations and active learning techniques in a way that can engage students and improve their learning. The following figure illustrates the model for interactive lecturing that I shared at the 2019 Teaching Professor Conference:

Figure 1. Interactive lecturing (Barkley & Major, 2018, p. 16)

Interactive lecturing is a useful approach for faculty who not only want or need to lecture but also hope to do more than simply transmit information. Rather than merely presenting material, during interactive lectures faculty embed a well-planned, engaging presentation within a sequence of activities that help students understand, process, apply, and rehearse new information. Thus faculty can use interactive lectures to encourage students to engage in a structured and supportive learning environment that ensures they are active participants before, during, and after the lecture.

Interactive lecturing: research-supported tips and techniques

Interactive lecturing is both a good idea and a proven teaching and learning strategy.

Research shows that more students fail and drop out of lecture-only courses than do students in classes with active learning components included in the lecture sessions. By supporting students with engaging presentations embedded in active learning techniques, you can support and improve student learning in lectures. Below are some research-supported tips and techniques you can use when choosing interactive lectures.

SAMPLE TIPS FOR ENGAGING LECTURE PRESENTATIONS

Many of us have attended boring lectures in which the speaker drones on and on in a dull, monotonous voice. Interactive lecturing requires an engaging presentation as a core component within a carefully constructed process designed to ensure that listeners participate actively in their learning. Table 1 provides examples of what you can do to make your presentation more effective.

	Tip	Description
Before the lecture	Sticky-note diagrams	You can use sticky-note diagrams to generate ideas for a lecture, identify common themes among the ideas, and then sort and organize the ideas to develop and organize lecture content.
During the lecture	Aristotelian triptych	The Aristotelian triptych is a good way to provide support to a lecture. It enables you to reinforce the key message and most important supporting idea. In short, tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, and tell them what you told them.
After the lecture	The synthesis	At the end of the lecture, briefly synthesize the central and supporting ideas.

Table 1. Sample engaging lecture tips (adapted from Barkley & Major, 2018)

SAMPLE ACTIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES THAT SUPPORT LEARNING DURING LECTURES

Despite our best efforts to teach students through engaging presentations, it is ultimately each student's responsibility to put in the effort to actually learn from them. Thus, it is important to think through what you can assign students to do to support their learning from your presentation. Table 2 includes several examples of active learning techniques that support learning in lectures.

	Technique	Description
Before the lecture	Active reading documents	Active reading documents (ARDs) are carefully prepared forms that guide students through the process of critical and careful reading.
During the lecture	Guided notes	Guided notes provide students with an organizational structure for taking notes during a lecture. In particular, the notes present students with specific questions to answer or blanks to fill in as the lecture progresses.
After the lecture	Lecture wrapper	Lecture wrappers enable students to listen to a lecture to identify its key points and then compare their judgments to what the instructor identifies as the most important points.

Table 2. Sample active learning techniques (adapted from Barkley & Major, 2018)

An example session plan

One of the key questions about interactive lecturing is how to do it. Incorporating learning activities that function as what Barkley and I refer to as bookends, interleaves, and overlays to a lecture presentation can help students be active participants throughout the class session. I describe each of these briefly below.

BOOKENDS

Bookends are structures positioned on either side of the presentation to support the lecture. Prior to a presentation, a bookend might take the form of a preparation guide, an online quiz or module, or a quick prediction exercise that kicks off the lecture. After a presentation it might be a summary or reflection exercise. Sometimes it works well to start a presentation with a bookend that you revisit at the end—for example, asking students to reflect on what they already know about a topic before you present on it and then asking them to reflect on and identify key learning or questions they still have after the presentation.

OVERLAYS

Overlays are learning activities used during the presentation to help students focus on the lecture content. They may involve techniques that promote active listening or note-taking activities. The idea is to ask students to do something active to help them more closely focus on what you are saying.

INTERLEAVES

Interleaves involve alternating between lectures and active learning; they thus occur in between presentation segments to help break up the lecture so students have time to process what you have said. You might, for example, choose to interleave presentations with quick pair discussions.

Table 3 provides an example of how a 50-minute class session might work using bookends, overlays, and interleaves:

Bookend	*Overlay*	*Interleave*	*Overlay*	*Interleave*	*Overlay*	*Bookend*
5 mins	15 mins	5 mins	15 mins	5 mins	15 mins	5 minutes
Do Update Your Classmate Memo	**Complete Guided Notes** Listen to Lecture Presentation	**Do One Sentence Summary**	**Complete Guided Notes** Listen to Lecture Presentation	**Do Real World Application Card**	**Complete Guided Notes** Listen to Lecture Presentation	**Complete Lecture Wrapper**

Table 3. Sample interactive lecture session (Barkley & Major, 2019, p. 72)

By structuring your session using these three techniques, you can ensure that your lecture presentation incorporates active learning techniques that help students engage. Bookends, overlays, and interleaves allow you to support and extend lecture presentations in ways that focus on improving student learning.

Conclusion

Faculty need not avoid the lecture entirely. Rather, when we use it, we should embed it within a series of activities designed to help students learning. We should use whatever pedagogical tools will best help us accomplish our teaching objectives and our students meet their learning goals. And interactive lecturing is an engaging pedagogical approach with a well-developed research base to support it.

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Teaching and Learning Social Skills through Learner-Generated Podcasts

Sarika Narinesingh and Anne Song

As part of our teaching philosophy, we believe in the value of exploring contentious issues with our students to encourage civic engagement and effective leadership. When we introduce contentious issues in the classroom, we define a contentious topic as one that is (1) debatable and inconclusive among experts and (2) deeply important to the general public (Zimmerman & Robertson, 2017). In the process of introducing contentious topics, however, we learned that we run the risk of confronting comments from students such as the following:

> *"That's just your opinion!"*
>
> *"I'm entitled to my opinion!"*
>
> *"You're just pushing an agenda."*
>
> *"That's just your experience."*

We found that when students encountered perspectives that were unfamiliar and disagreeable to them, they would often voice conjectures as self-evident truths, respond with aggression or reticence, and reject their peers' perspectives and lived experiences. This anti-intellectual attitude was also reflected in their assignments. To give you a better idea, our students would dismiss the findings of credible experts or knowledgeable persons with "Well, that's just their opinion" statements and cherry-pick evidence that confirmed their biases. Ultimately, our students failed to build credibility as writers and researchers.

Upon reflection, it dawned on us that we had unfairly assumed that students had the social skills to navigate discussions about contentious topics. By social skills, we mean specific interpersonal behaviors, such as the following:

- Careful listening
- Appreciation of diverse perspectives
- Suspension of judgment
- Civil disagreement
- Clarity of expression
- Probing inquiry

These social skills are crucial to engaging in civil and productive discussions. By performing these social skills, learners actively inhabit and embody an intellectual attitude that centers open-mindedness, intellectual humility, and integrity, which then prepares them to craft logical and credible arguments.

To teach social skills, we designed a podcasting assignment as a prewriting activity. For our podcasting assignment, students record a group discussion about a contentious issue, including topics such as housing insecurity, prison reform, and immigration policies. In the recording, students assess the validity of two published articles that offer divergent perspectives on the topic, defend their own points of view, and contend with their peers' perspectives.

So why podcasting of all things? How does this medium help our students to become open-minded, intellectually humble communicators? We gravitated toward podcasting because it is a unique medium that allows speakers to record themselves and listen back. This means that students are forced to reflect on *how* they sound when they engage with others. We propose that the podcast medium is absolutely critical to helping our students improve their social skills in a *self-reflective and self-conscious way*—a benefit that other verbal activities cannot offer. This all comes down to the aurality and technology involved in podcasting.

Overall, we found that after podcasting, students were better equipped to build their credibility, make reasoned conclusions, and engage with a range of diverse perspectives in a civil and productive way.

In her paper "Podcasting and Performativity: Multimodal Invention in an Advanced Writing Class," Leigh A. Jones (2010) argues that podcasting is essentially an aural performance that deepens students' awareness of audience and therefore the importance of connecting with that audience. We take Jones's claim a step further. In addition to this deep awareness of audience, we argue that the technology of the podcast allows students to listen to their own voices, reflect on their blind spots, and assess and improve their social skills by rerecording. This is what makes podcasting unique; we can teach the same social skills for in-class discussions, presentations, and debates, but these in-class opportunities privilege students who are vocal and able to think quickly on their feet. The podcast medium, on the other hand, is unique because it affords students the semi-privacy to aurally perform for a listening audience. In other words, students can thoughtfully deliberate and rehearse what they want to say and how they want to sound. Students also have the safe space to record and rerecord their voices after reflecting on how their ideas and the delivery of their ideas affect others. Through podcasting, then, students can improve

their social and, in turn, writing and research skills. Overall, we found that after podcasting, students were better equipped to build their credibility, make reasoned conclusions, and engage with a range of diverse perspectives in a civil and productive way.

To scaffold the development of specific social skills necessary for civil and productive discussion, we recommend the four following pre-podcasting activities.

Listening to teacher podcasts

To help our students develop their social skills, we modeled for our students what social skills sound like in an academic conversation. We created our own podcast, *Discourse*, with the tagline: "a podcast that explores multiple perspectives to think deeply and connect honestly with each other." In each episode, we discuss a text that our students are reading and analyzing in class. Just as our students would, we analyze the validity and the rhetorical strategies of the piece, and we share our own reasoned judgments about the piece and the topic. The teacher podcast episodes, which are readily available for our students to download and listen to on the go, is an excellent supplementary resource for the students. Furthermore, it models for our students what a respectful exchange of ideas can sound like.

Articulating social skills

In addition to our teacher podcast episodes, we provided students with sentence stems that frame what the social skills might sound like (Figure 1). For example, to show students how to disagree agreeably, we provided stems such as "Yui, I respect and understand why you say that, but I can't agree with your reasoning because ____." As the course progressed, we then encouraged students to "own" these social skills by reflecting on and identifying the expressions and language they naturally used in their conversations. For example, one student stated that they would express civil disagreement by saying, "I hear you, and I think that's a fair point, but ____."

DISCOURSE

Social Skills for a Civil and Productive Discussion

Instructions

To have a civil and productive discussion with others, it's important to practice the following social skills to avoid shutting down the conversation, dismissing other people's experiences, and disrespecting your interlocutors. Imagine the discussion you're going to have on your podcast episode. In the right-hand column, write down what these social skills would sound like in your own words:

Social Skills	What would this social skill sound like in your own words?
1. **Listen carefully to correctly understand others** (to prevent making assumptions; to avoid misunderstanding)	
2. **Appreciate diverse perspectives** (to value differences; to connect with others)	
3. **Suspend judgment** (to withhold personal biases; to connect with others)	
4. **Disagree agreeably** (to stay true to your beliefs; to respect opinions that conflict with your own)	
5. **Check that your ideas have been clearly and logically expressed** (to advocate for yourself; to connect with others)	
6. **Ask probing questions** (to continue the conversation; to understand multiple perspectives)	

Figure 1

Listening to podcasts

We also encourage assigning podcast episodes for your students to listen to. Episodes from podcasts such as *This American Life*, *Here to Slay*, *Ear Hustle*, and *99% Invisible* can be excellent texts for students to not only familiarize themselves with podcasts but also practice listening for and identifying social skills—or the lack thereof. Students can use an adapted version of the "Social Skills for a Civil & Productive Discussion" handout (Figure 1) to identify where and how the speakers on the podcast episode demonstrate or fail to demonstrate these social skills as well as the impact they have on the audience.

Engaging with the discourse skills placemat

As a classroom activity, we also recommend incorporating the discourse skills placemat (Figure 2). The placemat is divided into four sections: elaboration/clarification, synthesis, creative thinking, and critical thinking. Our students know that to engage in academic conversations with other people or with the texts we read, we prompt and respond with these discourse skills. But to do this successfully, we remind students that they must also work their social skills into their prompts and responses. The placemat allows students to share how they might demonstrate discourse skills and articulate them using social skills.

Discourse Skills Placemat
Critical Thinking
Prompt
Respond
Elaboration & Clarification
Prompt
Respond
Synthesis
Prompt
Respond
Creative Thinking
Prompt
Respond
What do you mean by...?
What makes you think that?
What did you take away from what I said...?
I mean to say...
I think this because...
Correct me if I'm wrong, but are you saying that...?
How would you respond to the argument or idea that...?
How does that relate/ connect to the problem of...?
Whose perspective is missing in this?
I want to add to/ expand on your point about...
I can see your point of view; however, I think we should also consider... because...
What struck me about what you said is ..., which makes me wonder if...
The main message or idea seems to be...
What if we summarized our discussion as...?
Our points seem to suggest that the key takeaway is...
What have we discussed so far and have we answered the original question?
How can we bring this all together?
What is the key takeaway from this discussion?
Yes, but can you provide credible evidence to support why you say that?
What has led you to believe that?
Why would someone be offended by that idea?
Yes, for example...
In the text, it says here that..."
In fact, researchers from... found that...

Figure 2

These pre-podcasting activities prompt students to not only recognize the importance of social skills but also reflect on how they can improve their own social skills so that they can have more civil and productive discussions about contentious issues. Once students completed these pre-podcasting activities and the podcasting assignment, they became demonstrably more open-minded and intellectually humble communicators. For example, students approached subsequent assignments with an awareness of and willingness to make reasoned conclusions based on a careful investigation of diverse perspectives and evidence. As a result, students produced intellectually rigorous work that was persuasive, logical, and credible. We have found that podcasting, because of the aurality and technology involved, has radically transformed the way students can master social skills and prepare for professional leadership and civic engagement.

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Engaging Generation Z Learners: Strategies to Engage the Digital Generation

Vickie S. Cook

To engage a generation of learners who are as comfortable in digital space as they are in the physical world requires faculty to employ and expand on teaching practices that best align with learners' needs and expectations. While remembering that each individual student brings many skills and challenges to the classroom, we will look at the characteristics that many of this generation of students share.

Generation Z learners are best characterized as individuals born between 1995 and 2012. These learners are creative, want to make a difference in the world, are comfortable using technology in a variety of ways, and appreciate working individually with their teachers and their classmates. Below, I summarize five specific strategies you can use with this complex generation of learners, including a list of best practices for each strategy.

Video

During their K–12 schooling, Generation Z students have typically been encouraged to explore their creative natures. They have been encouraged to think broadly about topics and their learning has been assessed in a variety of ways. Many students have created insightful presentations, wonderful videos, strong podcasts, artwork, and excellent written work to show their creativity. Other students struggle with the tasks assigned and have been unable to find a medium that allows their creativity to flourish. Video is often called the medium of communication for Generation Z students. Being creative with video allows Gen Z students to write by making scripts, learn inclusivity by practicing digital accessibility techniques, and use technology (including digital photography and automation) in impressive ways. Providing students with opportunities to tap into their creative natures by producing strong video work will assist them in developing their own knowledge sets.

Digital tools are a comfortable choice for this generation to use to approach creative solutions to problems. Students have also been immersed in the use of video for their own personal learning activities as they regularly avail themselves of YouTube to learn how to do, make, and create.

As you consider this strategy, think of how you can use video in your lectures to share content and lectures. Implementing curated video to supplement course materials will also assist students in mastering concepts and construct possible solutions to complex problems. By allowing students to use video as one approach to assignments, you are

allowing Gen Z students to work in a medium that comes naturally to them while providing parameters related to the assignment.

BEST PRACTICES FOR USING VIDEO ASSIGNMENTS

1) Use rubrics that define what is required to earn the appropriate points and meet learning outcomes.
2) Require scripts to be written to encourage the development of strong writing skills
3) Assign roles for group work (researcher, scriptwriter, director, producer, actor, evaluator, etc.).
4) Require appropriate citations for research.
5) Require that video assignments meet a standard related to the content learning outcomes and a standard of production for videography.

Experiential learning

Generation Z students are truly committed to making a difference. Accordingly, many Gen Z students volunteer for local Habitats for Humanity, area hospitals, food banks, schools, and other organizations to improve and make more equitable area inhabitants' lives.

To use this strategy, it is necessary for students to understand how what they both care about and are willing to do for the initiatives they care about can become part of the learning experience.

By using experiential learning and allowing for the activity to be flexible, faculty can lead students into a great understanding of how their selflessness is also helping with the foundational learning of a skill set that will be needed in the world of work.

BEST PRACTICES IN HELPING STUDENTS THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES DESIGNED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

1) Summarize the purpose of the exercise.
2) Allow students to choose an agency, an organization, or a cause they will get behind and work for to meet an organizational goal.
3) Require students to produce a product that shows how their experiential learning activity relates to or aligns with your overall course objectives.
4) Give students a rubric so they understand how you will assess learning outcomes.

Individualization

Generation Z students prefer highly individualized approaches. They create and build ideas and products regularly in an online format. They applaud individualization and equality throughout their generation. They look for ways in which they can tailor and customize their experiences in any learning modality. The age of digital customization has made individualization easier to achieve.

In the classroom, structure for individualization has been a pedagogical tool in the K–12 arena for the time that this generation participated. With the advent of many of the digital tools we have today, computer-enhanced instruction allows for individualization in almost every field of study and should be considered in higher education.

To use this strategy with students, it is imperative that faculty understand the challenges for individualizing assessments and are comfortable with allowing students a high degree of flexibility in meeting and demonstrating their mastery of learning outcomes.

Generation Z students are equally comfortable in the digital and physical worlds. This "phygital" approach allows students to move back and forth easily and efficiently as they learn new content.

BEST PRACTICES FOR INDIVIDUALIZATION

1) Create learning contracts to ensure that students completely understand the desired outcome.
2) Be comfortable with students choosing a product to show mastery of a learning outcome
3) Be flexible in grading assessments.
4) Provide strong rubrics for multiple projects (a written paper, a video, a podcast, a play or screenplay, a sculpture, creation of an app or a piece of software, etc.).
5) Be able to guide students in the use of multiple approaches to fail, start again, and eventually succeed.

Immersion

Generation Z students are equally comfortable in the digital and physical worlds. This "phygital" approach allows students to move back and forth easily and efficiently as they

learn new content. Generation Z students also appreciate face-to-face interactions, such shopping in a physical environment, and look forward to group discussions both in person and online. Because of this facility with both digital and physical approaches, classroom spaces can optimize strategies for learning from both. Provide strong reasoning to your students regarding why digital and physical approaches matter. Yes, an interview can be conducted via Zoom. Discuss why and when a Zoom or an in-person interview is preferred.

BEST PRACTICES FOR IMMERSION IN BOTH DIGITAL AND PHYSICAL EXPERIENCES

1) Provide parameters that include both physical and digital experiences.
2) Include assessment materials that focus on in-person interactions (e.g., interviews and mock interviews, attendance at theater productions, and museum visits).
3) Encourage students to build strong face-to-face skills, such as looking at someone directly while speaking to them, shaking hands, and cordially sharing conflicting ideas.
4) Use strong rubrics that indicate the purpose of both digital and physical interactions in terms of learning outcomes.
5) Consider using augmented or virtual reality or apps to engage students with content.

Cultivating curiosity

Gen Z students have quick and easy access to massive amounts of information. But what they do with that information is the key. How does a student spot fake news? Develop opinions and a sense of purpose from the information available? Effectively argue a point?

Developing a sense of curiosity within subject matter is necessary for Gen Z students. Getting students to not simply collect and use information but develop strong thinking skills is critical to their future in the workplace and in life.

Best practices for cultivating curiosity

1) Encourage students to go beyond mere information gathering.
2) Encourage students to think broadly and deeply about a subject.
3) Engage students in activities in different roles, such as those noted in the group approach to video development above.
4) Ask students what interests them and encourage them to find ways to use the information they have collected.

5) Ask "so what?" questions that help students develop a deeper sense of why the information gathered is important and what its impact will be.

6) Insist upon strong information literacy skill development.

7) In each rubric, include at least one assessment criterion related to curiosity.

This generation's learners are equally comfortable in digital and physical space. As faculty we can find teaching strategies that align our intended learning outcomes to students' expectations. The five strategies I have discussed here are not comprehensive; there are many others you can use to engage Generation Z students as they develop academic skills with strength, purpose, and curiosity. What strategies might you suggest your colleagues use to fully engage these learners in high-impact practices in the classroom?

Small Online Teaching Strategies That Engage Students and Improve Learning

Flower Darby

Online courses present unique challenges for both students and faculty. We've been teaching and learning in person for millennia, and we know a lot about how to do it well. The same is not true for online education. This modality has existed in its current form for only about 20 years. We're still learning what works. We're still getting familiar with what a good online classroom looks like—where the front of the room is, where the desks are, and where the light switch is. Indeed, many students and faculty today are relatively inexperienced in online learning environments, especially considering that we've taught and learned in physical classrooms for years.

And yet the demand for online classes continues to grow. Students who would otherwise be unable to attend college due to work and family obligations now have a way to pursue credentials and improve their lives. The flexibility afforded by online classes makes it easier for more people to earn a higher education than if the only option were to take classes on campus. We can improve our online teaching so that our students have a rich and rewarding learning experience—and we can do it one small step at a time.

Tomorrow, next week, or next semester, consider making just one change to the way you set up or teach your online course.

Based on the approach James M. Lang and I outline in *Small Teaching Online: Applying Learning Science in Online Classes* (2019), which presents minor modifications to our classes to produce major learning gains, we'll explore eight practical, evidence-based strategies we can apply in our online classes—approaches that are neither overwhelming nor time-consuming, techniques that won't place an undue burden on our time. These strategies are organized according to four guiding principles that are especially relevant for online classes.

Tomorrow, next week, or next semester, consider making just one change to the way you set up or teach your online course. Because these strategies are grounded in research and intentionally applied, you'll likely find that this small change will have an outsize impact on student learning and engagement.

Surface backward design

Backward design is a method that helps us plan effective classes in all modalities. I like to compare this method to planning a road trip. First, we decide where we want to go. What is our destination? Similarly, where do we want out students to wind up at the end of the semester? What do we want them to know and be able to do? Second, how will we know we've arrived at our desired location? What will our students do to demonstrate their learning at the end of the course, and what incremental signposts (assessments) are needed to ensure they're on track to reach their destination? Finally, what do we need for the trip? If we're heading to the beach, we need towels and beach chairs. If we're going hiking in the mountains, we need sturdy boots and trekking poles. In both cases, we'd do well to pack an ice chest with cool drinks and snacks for the drive. When planning our classes, we think about what our students need to succeed throughout the journey. What content and learning activities will help them successfully complete the final exam or project?

Helping our students *see* the intentional design of an online class is especially important because we don't typically meet with them two or three times per week (like we do when teaching in person) to provide guidance and reminders and tie different concepts and learning activities together. To help your students see the purpose of online tasks and how each one helps them prepare for the final assessment, you can do the following:

- **Begin the final assessment in week 1.** Ask students to think about the final project, exam, or paper, and begin working on it right away. For example, have students submit a photo of a hand-drawn concept map with their initial ideas about the final project by the end of the first week.
- **Reflect on learning objectives.** In a well-designed class, all assessments and learning activities align with and support the course's learning objectives. Help your students think about what they're learning and why by asking them to reflect on class learning objectives in writing or by submitting an audio or video recording. Which objective do they think is most relevant for their goals? Which seems most daunting? Alternatively, have them respond to each one as they consider what they will learn in the course.

Harness the science of emotion

Emotion and cognition are inextricably linked, and emotions are powerful tools for grabbing and holding our attention (Cavanagh, 2016). We can put this power to work in online classes to better engage online students so they can learn more effectively.

- **Bring your passion.** Rediscover why you love your subject, and make a deliberate effort to share that with your students. Post news stories about current events related to your subject matter as they catch your attention. Tell your students why what

they learn in your class will help them reach their academic, personal, and career goals. Communicate enthusiasm in your writing and voice recordings to capture and keep your online students' interest and attention.

- **Convey empathy and support.** Online students often do their coursework by themselves, and they often have competing demands on their time. Help them stay motivated to complete your course by being a cheerleader, a coach, or a mentor (whichever persona you prefer) in ways that extend beyond your content. Post encouraging announcements, point out how far students have come, tell them you know they can do it. Small reassurances such as these can do a great deal to help students keep going throughout an often-isolating experience.

Design for persistence

Online courses have higher attrition rates than in-person classes. For students who are still developing time management and organization skills, the flexibility afforded by this format provides too much leeway. Let's help our students develop these attributes and make steady progress in our courses with activities such as these:

- **Assign a goals contract.** Have students sign a syllabus agreement that includes statements indicating that they understand course policies, their responsibilities as learners, and so on. Add a second component to prompt them to think through important related issues. Ask students to identify two goals for their learning in class, one action they will take to help them reach their goals (intentionally schedule time for coursework, for example), one challenge they anticipate, and one strategy they might use if that challenge arises.
- **Nudge selected students.** On day three of your accelerated online course, email each student who has not yet logged into class, encouraging them to do so. Alternatively, after the first exam, email each student who earned less than 70 percent, recommending online tutoring or similar support. Be strategic about your communication; give a little extra attention to those students who could use some additional help.

Help students make connections

As an expert in your discipline, you know exactly how concepts relate to and build on one other. Your students don't have that expertise. We can help them learn new material more effectively by helping them connect and organize new information for themselves.

- **Activate prior knowledge.** When we relate new information to what we already know, we retain it more deeply and can recall it more easily than when we learn new information with no context to guide our understanding. Create module pretests that ask students what they already know about that module's topic or help

them think about their previous experience with these ideas. Pretests can be ungraded; set them as conditional release (most learning management systems allow you to do this) so that submitting the completed questionnaire unlocks the rest of the module's content.

- **Provide the framework.** Give students a skeletal outline or partial slides to take notes on while watching a mini-lecture video or doing the reading. Have them upload their document or a photo of it for points. Helping students organize new ideas helps novice learners retain information and begin to make connections between concepts.

Making small adjustments such as these can bring about big improvements in student engagement and learning in online courses. Don't try all of these at once; rather, pick one, try it, refine it, then add another. You—and your students—will be glad you did.

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Putting Students in the Driver's Seat: Equip, Empower, Energize

Cathy Box

No one can deny that the world in which we live and work is changing at a tumultuous pace. We live in a knowledge economy, driven by technologies that require different skill sets than were needed of workers in the age of industry. Students will encounter work and life situations that require them to learn as they go, perhaps even teach themselves, as they address contemporary problems, challenges, and proposed solutions—ones we have no way of anticipating as we prepare our curriculum. Although this is reality for students, "we rarely (if ever) purposefully teach these students to be self-regulated learners—a feature that historically tends to be a serendipitous result of classroom instruction rather than part of a purposeful plan designed to equip students for their future" (Box, 2018, p. 124).

We often neglect the role of the student in the process, assuming that it is our job to assess and the student's to respond. But by not partnering with students in the process, not empowering them, and leaving their self-regulation to chance, we fall short of preparing them for the future.

The question du jour for universities, then, is this: What should be our role in preparing students for success in a knowledge economy? It is a given that students need content knowledge in math, science, technology, and so forth, but content knowledge is not enough. I join the chorus of educators who proclaim a moral imperative for universities to prepare students for what lies ahead by explicitly teaching them how to learn, fostering the skills they need to monitor and mediate their own learning in order to be productive and prosper.

I propose we do this through *metacognition* and the process of *formative assessment*. Educators often define metacognition as "thinking about thinking," but that description sometimes creates the misconception that thinking critically about *content* is metacognitive. It is not. In short, metacognition broadly means having knowledge about cognition as well as control over and regulation of one's own cognitive systems (Händel, Artelt, & Weinert, 2013; Vrugt & Oort, 2008). I suggest we call it "thinking about learning," a nuanced but crucial distinction.

So how do we purposefully embed the teaching of metacognition into our curricula? I recommend using student formative assessment strategies to drive the process. As a reminder, formative assessment includes a series of practices in which both students and teachers gather evidence of learning *while* learning and use it to determine what comes next. Students use and develop their metacognitive skills as they monitor their own progress and decide what adjustments they need to make in their learning tactics, and teachers reflect and adjust as well. We often neglect the role of the student in the process, assuming that it is our job to assess and the student's to respond. But by not partnering with students in the process, not empowering them, and leaving their self-regulation to chance, we fall short of preparing them for the future.

There are many strategies serve this purpose, but here are a few that are effective, relatively easy to implement, and structured around three guiding questions: (1) Where am I going? (2) Where am I now? and (3) How can I close the gap? (Chappuis, 2015).

Where am I going?

If students are to monitor their own progress, they first need to be aware of intended learning targets or outcomes. Expectations should never be a mystery to students. Additionally, we know that learning improves when students reflect on what they already know, what they might not know, and what they think can be learned before and throughout a unit of study. An effective strategy that meets this need is to have students create course-related *evidence portfolios*.

Evidence portfolios allow students the opportunity to (1) become aware of expectations up front, (2) document their learning, and (3) show evidence of mastery by the end of the semester. Portfolios are intended to help students think about what they have learned and reflect on their success.

STEPS

1) Determine your learning targets and share them with your students at the beginning of the semester. To do so helps them become familiar with course expectations before getting started—a necessary first step in self-regulated learning.

2) Ask students to "traffic light" each target before beginning instruction (green = *I know this*, yellow = *I need some help with this*, and red = *I don't know this at all*).

3) Periodically during the semester, ask students to traffic light again and reflect on their growth. What have they learned? What do they still need to work on?

4) At the end of the semester, ask students to traffic light each learning target again and provide evidence of growth or mastery of each target.

    a) Artifacts that serve as evidence may include anything graded that indicates mastery of a given learning outcome.

b) Students should include a written reflection that describes the artifact, why they chose that artifact to serve as evidence, and how completing the assignment contributed to their knowledge.

Where am I now?

Once students are aware of learning targets and course expectations, they should have the opportunity to assess their level of mastery and set goals. The process of reflection has the potential to deepen the learning and puts students squarely in the driver's seat as they think about where they are in the process and what they should do next (Sawyer, 2014). But students do not normally do this on their own; they need guidance. Additionally, students tend to set performance goals (i.e., grades) rather than learning ones. Thus we need to foster and encourage the habit of focusing on learning. One effective strategy that directs students toward self-assessment and goal setting is a *post-exam review*.

Faculty have used a variety of post-exam review formats, but many reviews fail to help students set concrete goals with specific learning tactics that can later be analyzed for effectiveness. This review includes those important metacognitive steps.

STEPS

1) While taking a test, students indicate their level of confidence in each answer (*sure* or *unsure*), then after the test is graded and returned, they analyze each wrong answer.

2) For each wrong answer, they indicate whether they missed it due to a simple mistake or a lack of knowledge. Ideally, students will have marked missed questions as *unsure*, but often this is not the case. Prompting students to link the two forces them to assess their knowledge of what they do and don't know.

3) Students list learning targets that they've mastered, ones that need a little work, and ones they just don't get.

4) Next, students answer questions such as these:

   - What study strategies did you use to prepare for this exam?
   - How happy are you with your exam results? Did you know the information that you needed to know to succeed?
   - Based on your test analysis, what percentage of questions did you miss due to simple mistakes? What percentage did you miss because of a lack of knowledge? Were you aware that you didn't know the answer to questions that you missed?
   - What stumps you?

5) After analyzing their progress and the process they used to get there, students set learning goals and articulate specific study strategies they plan to employ, such as concept mapping, using flash cards, and making practice test questions.

How can I close the gap?

It probably won't surprise you that many of our students simply do not know how to study. They often rely on unproductive techniques such as "going over" the material again and again and highlighting important concepts. In fact, the study strategies learners prefer—rereading text and massed practice—are also the least effective. As Brown, Roediger, and McDaniel write in *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning* (2014), "By massed practice we mean the single-minded, rapid-fire repetition of something you're trying to burn into memory, the 'practice-practice-practice' of conventional wisdom. Cramming for exams is an example. Rereading and massed practice give rise to feelings of fluency that are taken to be signs of mastery, but for true mastery or durability these strategies are *largely a waste of time*" (p. 3; emphasis added).

Our students need to be taught how to study and how to learn, and you have the perfect opportunity to teach them. During the semester and especially before exams, discuss their study habits with them. Talk about what works and what doesn't; give them something concrete to try. You are familiar with discipline-specific study strategies, so why not share them?

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Advancing Your Scholarly Teaching into the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Cynthia Haynes, Sara Marcketti, and Ann Marie VanDerZanden

The scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) involves framing a research question related to student learning and systematically investigating it. The research may include qualitative or quantitative data collection (or both) as well as direct and indirect measures. Data analysis may also take multiple forms. As with disciplinary research, an important end goal of SoTL is to communicate findings with members of the professional community for peer validation. A key aspect of SoTL is that the results are shared with the community of college and university educators. As a result, what researchers learn about the classroom experience, the learning environment, and the attainment of learning outcomes can have an impact far beyond an individual's classroom (Hutchings, Huber, & Ciccone, 2011).

Many faculty, particularly those in tenure-track positions, are interested in completing and publishing SoTL projects. Although faculty are well-versed in and comfortable doing disciplinary research, many are unfamiliar with how to effectively conduct SoTL research.

You need not be an education scholar to conduct SoTL, but you must be familiar with what has already been done so you don't repeat or miss foundational scholarship.

An important consideration in SoTL is differentiating it from scholarly teaching. Scholarly teaching draws from a discipline's best practices and focuses on student-centered learning. SoTL, while also drawing from best practices, results in formal, peer-reviewed work that becomes part of the larger knowledge base of teaching and learning (Witman & Richlin, 2007).

Our goal at the Teaching Professor Conference was to outline a framework and provide a stepwise process to guide faculty, instructors, and graduate students in developing an SoTL research project. Specific learning goals for participants were as follows: (1) identify and develop a researchable question, (2) develop a framework and protocol for data collection, and (3) create a SoTL project timeline, including completion milestones.

Building on a model described by Bishop-Clark and Dietz-Uhler (2012), we led participants through a six-step process to formulate an SoTL project.

Generating a research question

For many faculty, SoTL research questions often derive from real-time classroom experiences. These questions are often discipline-specific and relate to a particular activity or practice, such as team-based learning or the use of a new technology; sometimes they result from personal reflection informed by student input. Research questions should be specific and measurable. For example, the question "Do students learn better in small classes?" is broad and difficult to quantify. By contrast, "Is student performance better on a final exam in a 20-student section or a 250-student section?" is narrow and easily answerable.

Conducting a literature review

The SoTL research process is much like conducting disciplinary research. Literature searches using terms related to your research question help you learn more about the existing body of research in the area you are interested in studying. Consider reviewing literature related to your discipline as well as the canon within the broader field of teaching and learning in higher education. You need not be an education scholar to conduct SoTL, but you must be familiar with what has already been done so you don't repeat or miss foundational scholarship. This is also an appropriate time to identify an applicable journal for publishing your SoTL research.

Designing the study

After reviewing the literature, you should have some clarity on how to design the study, how to identify and select your experimental group, and whether you will need a comparison group.

Data collection protocol

To answer your research question, you must consider what types of data are needed, such as direct or indirect measures. Direct measures often derive from the classroom experience and can include course assignments, exam scores, portfolios, and presentations. Indirect measures involve student perceptions or reflections and may consist of surveys or focus groups inside or outside the classroom environment. Additionally, many institutions collect data—such as student GPA, entering ACT or SAT scores, and retention and graduation rates—that can provide context for your study. It is imperative to determine your local institutional review board (IRB) processes before conducting a study. IRBs serve an important role in the protection of human research subjects' rights. Some journals require IRB verification prior to publication.

Data analysis

Direct and indirect measures can include numbers analyzed quantitatively or words analyzed qualitatively. Examples of quantitative data would be frequencies or means

of student exam scores. Examples of qualitative data might be themes identified from student journal entries. It is important to consider your own expertise in methods of data collection and analysis as SoTL often utilizes mixed methods approaches, which combine quantitative and qualitative methods. Collaborators experienced with one or both forms of data analysis may be needed for successful project completion. Several resources provide guidance on SoTL data analysis (Cross & Steadman, 1996; Kranzler, 2018).

Timeline for presentation and publication

It is helpful to identify a presentation or publication venue before beginning a study. Backward design can help you determine how long a project may take from conception to publication. The accompanying handout (see the next two pages) provides a planning framework for completing a SoTL project. If you are new to SoTL research, it may be useful to start with a pilot study to explore different experimental designs, determine the boundaries of what data are collectable and needed for publication, and identify ways to improve the overall project before beginning a larger study.

You may notice that the steps to conducting SoTL research are quite similar to disciplinary work. Benefits of SoTL include peer-reviewed outcomes for many promotion and tenure decisions, opportunities for community with fellow instructors, and powerful data and information with which to think about student learning and how to create more effective pedagogies and stronger curricula (Hutchings, Huber, & Ciccone, 2011).

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Turning Your Scholarly Teaching into the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

INDIVIDUAL ACTION PLAN FOR A SOTL PROJECT

Date created:

Which course(s)?

Research objective:

Researchable question:

IMPLEMENTATION

What group do you want to study?

How many people will be in the group?

Where will you conduct the study?

Will you need a comparison group?

Miscellaneous

Data Collection

Data to Collect	Resources Needed	Type of Data Direct/Indirect Qualitative/ Quantitative	Data Analysis Plan	How will you know whether you have made progress?

Implementation Timeline

Item	Resources Needed	Timeline Date	Resources Needed	How will you know whether you have made progress?

My Support Team/Colleagues(s)

Who will help support my efforts? How will you share your plan with them?

Maximizing Student Engagement with Course Readings

Fiona Hunt

Have you ever struggled to get students to do required readings? Do your students treat them as optional? Perhaps they do the readings, but when you ask them to engage in critical discussion or think deeply about the material, they are unable to do so. If any of these scenarios resonate with you, read on! In the paragraphs that follow, I introduce four activities guaranteed to motivate your students to do the required readings and think critically about them.

Jigsaw readings

Jigsaw activities work because there is an information gap between one group of students and another or between a student and their partner or group members. This means that a student or group of students possesses information that their group or another one needs and vice versa. Because of this gap, students are forced to listen to each other to gain a full picture and gather all relevant information.

The benefits of a jigsaw activity include students' working together, learning from each other, and thinking critically

HOW IT WORKS

In the context of course readings, there are two ways to do a jigsaw activity. The first is to have students read in class, and the second is to assign the readings for homework. Both approaches work well and are similar in their execution, involving only a couple of minor adjustments.

The idea is that each student will read only the text assigned to them and take notes on the important points so they can teach the content of their reading to other students in the class. As the instructor, you will have identified two to four readings that you'd like the students to cover, but each student will read only *one* of these. When it comes time to teach their peers, students work in groups and take turns explaining their readings. When they are not explaining, they take notes on the readings being explained to them. After all the information has been shared, the instructor leads a follow-up activity. This activity could be a discussion, a problem-solving exercise, or some other activity that can only be done with the information gleaned from all the readings.

BENEFITS OF THIS ACTIVITY

The benefits of a jigsaw activity include students' working together, learning from each other, and thinking critically about the readings by identifying the main points and teaching them to others. Jigsaw activities also encourage community and collaborative thinking. For the version in which the reading is done for homework (and is therefore likely lengthier than a reading done in class), students appreciate that you are asking them to do only one reading instead of all three or four. This contributes to your rapport with them; they appreciate that you respect their time.

DRAWBACKS

There are very few drawbacks to this activity. For one, you must set up the readings so that they are isolated from each other and only the students assigned to a given reading have access to it. The reason for isolating the readings is that you want to ensure that students need the information that the other students are teaching them; if all students can read all readings, they no longer need to listen to each other. Also, you must set aside time in class to run the jigsaw activity. Otherwise, the activity is fairly straightforward, and the benefits outnumber the drawbacks.

STUDENT MOTIVATION

What motivates students to do the readings and prepare for class by taking notes? Based on feedback I have received from many semesters of using this activity, students typically do not want to let their group members down, they don't want to look like slackers, and they don't want to look dumb. These are strong motivators!

Reading discussion roles

This activity is explained in detail in an article by Heather Parrott and Elizabeth Cherry (2011). I have found it helpful for motivating students not only to do the readings but also to engage critically with them.

HOW IT WORKS

Students are assigned a role the week before the discussion is to take place. In the intervening week, students complete the required reading(s) (everyone reads *all* texts identified by the instructor) through the lens of their role. When they come to class the following week, they bring with them their preparation and take part in discussion according to the requirements of their role. The instructor should identify one or two readings for students to discuss; three should be the limit as the discussion will extend beyond the allotted 30 minutes if more readings are assigned. The discussion in class should take 30–40 minutes of class time, and debriefing can take up to another 10 minutes.

The roles are as follows:

- The *discussion leader* identifies two or three questions related to the main ideas in the reading and poses them to the group. The discussion leader also facilitates the discussion, keeping everyone on track time-wise and ensuring that each person gets a chance to contribute.
- The *passage master* identifies one or two passages that are central to the point of the reading, that are particularly interesting, or that in some other way catch their attention. They read the passages aloud to the group to spark discussion.
- The *devil's advocate* critiques the reading. The challenge here is that the student with this role must find critical comments to make even if they agree with the reading. The devil's advocate is meant to stir things up, share alternatives, and get people thinking.
- The *illustrator* draws a picture or puts together a flow chart or other graphic based on the reading. Their contribution might highlight the main points of the reading, illustrate a reaction that they had while they read, or express disagreement. This role allows the student flexibility in terms of what they can draw.
- The *connector* finds connections between the reading and the real world. They can pull examples from sources such as the news, the workplace, or popular culture.
- The *recorder* takes notes during the discussion. They are also meant to participate and can ask questions to clarify points if things are unclear. After the discussion, all the other group members email their contributions to the recorder. The recorder then compiles everything into one document and uploads it to the learning management system for the instructor to see.

BENEFITS OF THIS ACTIVITY

Because this approach is highly structured, students know exactly what they are supposed to do. Discussion does not peter out; it can easily be sustained for 30 minutes. Students engage critically with the material, and they learn from each other as they work collaboratively. The discussion leader role helps students practice time management and group leadership. The activity also builds community as students get to know each other through the discussions.

DRAWBACKS

There are no drawbacks.

STUDENT MOTIVATION

My students said they got more out of the readings using this method and viewed the readings as more valuable than they do with the usual approach to readings, where everyone reads on their own and the instructor may or may not address the readings in

class. Additionally, as with the jigsaw activity, students reported that they didn't want to let their group members down, look like slackers, or appear unintelligent.

"Pass the paper" debate

This is an excellent activity to engage students who express themselves better on paper than in discussion and those who are shy to speak up in class. The way this activity works is that the instructor assigns one or two readings and tells students that they will be required to discuss them during the next class period. When students arrive for the next session, the instructor distributes the handout pictured in Figure 1 below, including a question that is related to the reading(s) in the diamond in the middle of the page. The question should encourage students to think deeply and critically. Students begin by putting their names at the top of the paper and follow the instructions in box 1. After the allotted time is up (approximately three to five minutes per box, but this will vary with each class and according to the question you ask) and they have responded in box 1, each student passes their paper to another student, who follows the instructions in box 2. The same process happens with boxes 3 and 4. When all boxes are complete, the fourth student passes the paper back to the original student—whose name is at the top of the paper—and that student reads over all the responses they got.

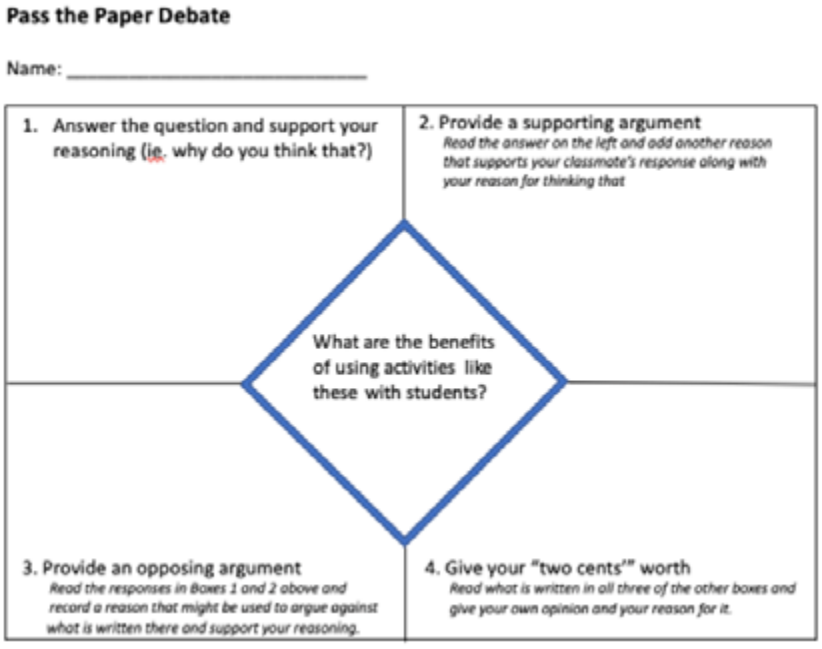

Figure 1. Template for "pass the paper" debate activity. Note that normally this document would take up a full 8.5" × 11" sheet of paper. The boxes should be big enough to accommodate lengthier responses. I have truncated them here to save space. In addition, you will need to change the question in the diamond to something relevant for your reading.

Once each student has had time to read their completed handout, the instructor can proceed in several ways. A class discussion or small group discussions about some aspect of the responses could ensue. An individual reflection on the reading, enhanced by the input from their peers, is another helpful follow-up. Alternately, the completed debate paper could be used as a jumping-off point for a research paper or other individual assignment.

A variation would be to ask each student to include their name with each of their responses. Doing so would hold students accountable to one another for what they write and encourage them to take the activity seriously, if that is an issue.

BENEFITS OF THIS ACTIVITY

Students learn from each other and think critically about the reading(s). This activity also allows introverts time for reflection, and it provides a springboard for other activities.

DRAWBACKS

Devising a good question for the central diamond can take time and thought.

STUDENT MOTIVATION

Because students know that others will read their ideas, they don't want to appear foolish or ill prepared (especially if you ask all students to include their names on every response).

Collaborative quiz

For this activity, students come to class having done the assigned readings and prepared to "demonstrate their knowledge." (Their professor will have instructed them to do this in the previous class. They do not know in what way they will demonstrate their knowledge.) The instructor distributes a quiz based on the reading(s) and asks students to complete it individually. The instructor scores the quiz and gives students their marks. Then students are put into groups and given the quiz again, but this time they can discuss the answers and help each other. All students in a group put their names on the same quiz paper. The instructor scores the quizzes again. If a student's group grade exceeds their individual grade, that student receives the average of the two scores for their quiz grade. If a student's individual score exceeds their group's score, they can keep the higher grade.

The main issue with this activity is the grading of the quiz. I suggest creating a self-grading electronic quiz or, if you have teaching assistants, recruiting their help to grade paper quizzes. Naturally, if you use an electronic quiz, you should hide the answers from the students until after they have completed the group quiz.

If you're not using a self-grading electronic quiz, plan an activity for students to do between the individual and group quizzes. This will give you time to do the scoring.

BENEFITS OF THIS ACTIVITY

Students learn together and from each other. They also learn from their mistakes. This activity builds community as students work together to improve their grades.

DRAWBACKS

The timely grading of the individual quiz is the only potential drawback to this activity.

STUDENT MOTIVATION

Students want a good grade. Also, after the first time, they will want to look prepared and intelligent in front of their peers during the collaborative part of the quiz.

Conclusion

Since applying these strategies in my classes, I no longer dread required readings. Students come to class prepared and participate actively. They glean more from the readings and as a result feel that they have received good value; the readings have become an interesting and useful component of the course and students are enthusiastic in their feedback. I trust that you will find these activities equally beneficial with your students!

Reference

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Learning from Men of Color: Success Strategies for At-Risk Students

Newton Miller

In all higher education programs, men of color (MOC) are the least likely subgroup to persist and be retained (Harper, 2006). Although the subgroup constitutes the smallest percentage of enrollees in online programs, it has one of the most rapidly trending growth rates in the industry (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2014). For us as educators, then, it makes sense to study MOC in online programs to understand what strategies, methodologies, and mindsets have helped them successfully navigate their programs.

I have done just that. I delivered a series of surveys and interviews to 1,282 MOC across three large online universities who had a GPA of at least 3.0, persisted in their programs yearly, and were on track to complete or had completed their programs at 100 or 125 percent of normal time. Our research revealed the following:

- Three common principles or pillars of mind drive successful MOC
- Self-implemented best practices that the MOC employed to establish and maintain momentum
- Gaps in the existing service model at their universities and how the MOC adjusted to remain successful
- Implications for modifications to course design and adjustments to the advising models and support services that embed strategies helpful to the success of MOC

An educational institution cannot dictate what MOC commit to, but if it knows their typical priorities, it can support them, understand them, and implement strategies that remind the MOC of their "why."

The pillars of mind, strategies for both students and institutions, and implications mapped to the success of MOC are research-proven strategies that are known stimulators of success for all populations in both the online and traditional face-to-face modalities.

Three pillars of mind

When my head assistant and I analyzed the survey results, an astounding finding emerged. The successful MOC overwhelmingly (98.3 percent) communicated three com-

mon values or principals—three pillars of mind—that motivate them and shape their actions:

1) They have had positive experiences with educators, curricula, and academic support teams.

2) They commit themselves to well-defined personal goals.

3) They are motivated by their responsibility to those who depend on them.

This is invaluable information for educators because it can shape how we develop learning objectives, instructional strategies, and academic support services.

All three pillars are based on commitment or perception. An educational institution cannot dictate what MOC commit to, but if it knows their typical priorities, it can support them, understand them, and implement strategies that remind the MOC of their "why."

Strategies students used to succeed

The strategies successful MOC students implemented in their online programs are not exclusive to this group. Rather, they are simply good habits that will enhance any student's academic achievement regardless of their ethnicity or gender. The study examined strategies in three areas: academics, advising, and support services.

ACADEMICS

There were six main strategies in academics: (1) create sacred study time, (2) preview the course to see what's in store, (3) communicate with the instructor, (4) collaborate with peers, (5) be aware of the resources available, and (6) maintain inner focus. Importantly, all six are self-imposed and self-regulated. Findings revealed that the successful MOC found strategies 3, 4, and 5 the most helpful. They emphasized communicating with the instructor as soon as and often as need arises.

ADVISING

There were three main strategies that students used to maximize their advisors as resources: (1) remain patient with changes, (2) periodically initiate contact with advisors, and (3) personalize relationships with advisors. Keep in mind that in online education, advising is done remotely, and advisors are often the most frequent and consistent connection students have to online institutions. Thus, from the students' perspective, their relationships with their advisors are crucial to their feeling that the institution is a real entity that can meet their needs. The successful MOC took it upon themselves to keep relationships with their advisors robust.

SUPPORT SERVICES

In the support services arena, the successful MOC referred to five specific supports: the

writing center and tutoring services, the library, technology services, the finance department, and career services. The three strategies they employed when utilizing these services were more like advice. They urged their fellow students to (1) make themselves aware of the services available, (2) find out how to access those services, and (3) use them as often as needed. This is a gigantic leap for MOC from socioeconomically distressed backgrounds. These men usually operate in survival mode and often hesitate to ask for help as it creates a type of vulnerability that could jeopardize their ability to survive. The fact that this strategy emerged was a major breakthrough in terms of learned behavior. The three recommendations the MOC participants made for support services were to (1) publicize links to the services, (2) simplify financial aid communication, and (3) make the career services department more relevant and helpful in finding employment. Because the university system had not done these things, successful MOC simply contacted their advisors to learn more about the support services available to them.

Five strategies to help MOC succeed

The survey and the interviews allowed us to identify concrete ways that online universities can proactively support the success of MOC. Most institutions could implement these strategies at little to no cost and without disrupting school culture. The more exciting news is that implementing them would serve the university's total enrollment irrespective of students' ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status or their classification as at-risk. Each strategy below relates to the pillars of mind addressed above; I indicate which ones apply in parentheses.

1) *Instructors should provide course-at-a-glance tables (pillars 1 and 2)*. These tables are nothing more than a quick weekly outline of the syllabus, including estimated time requirements and any special or extra tasks that students must complete. This handy tool helps students organize the events in their lives so that they can successfully accomplish what the course will require of them from week to week.

2) *Instructors should make accommodations for students at all levels (pillars 1 and 2)*. Specifically, instructors should make course introductory videos, relax deadlines, provide examples of exemplary assignments, make themselves available whenever students need assistance, and adopt an "I not F" strategy. This last accommodation is nothing more than allowing students to resubmit assignments after the instructor has provided formative feedback on the initial submission.

   Instructors will differ on how and to what degree they make these accommodations for their students. The good news: our study shows that even with those variations, instructional quality and student success greatly increase.

3) *Advising teams should schedule students within the same programs in cohorts (pillars 1 and 2)*. When students travel in cohorts, they feed off each other and provide an

organic and naturally developed sense of support, comfort, and academic safety that synergizes around each of their inherent strengths and weaknesses. The impact of placing students in cohorts throughout their programs is immeasurable for all students, but particularly for those categorized as at-risk.

4) *Instructors should foster a growth mindset (pillars 2 and 3)*. To do so, they should embed as many motivational quotes, personal messages that praise students' individual and collective achievements, and testimonials from students who previously took the course as they can. Although these strategies may not seem directly related to academic achievement or course learning outcomes, they directly address the growth mindset that at-risk students need to develop to learn how to succeed both in the course and throughout their educational careers.

5) *Institutions should create systems whereby faculty and advisers collaborate to welcome students into each new course (pillars 1 and 2)*. Collaboration between faculty and advisers creates opportunities to view student needs from different vantage points. Thus, when a collaborative welcome video, letter, or activity is distributed to students, all bases are covered, and each student feels more comfortable knowing that everyone in the system is working together in a unified way to help them be successful.

Importantly, strategies 2 and 4 are "ready to go": they don't cost anything, won't need approval from administration or faculty organizations, and can be implemented immediately by any instructor, at any institution, teaching any course. Individual instructors will have a learning curve as they find ways to effectively implement these two strategies. Thus, I suggest that instructors work together and form professional learning communities to discuss—in a nonjudgmental, "everything goes" style—what works as they implement these strategies.

Implications

This research has potential to transform teaching and learning in higher education. The subgroup studied was limited MOC, but the takeaways from the research apply to all populations that both online and face-to-face higher education programs serve. Initially, this research looked for ways to construct more inclusive, culturally responsive academic and student-facing systems that enhance support for MOC's success. Those things were identified, but the interventions turned out to be just as productive for all students. Thus, this research-based approach to course design, assignments, and assessment, while designed specifically to help MOC successfully navigate their online academic programs, is actually productive for all students in all higher education settings.

Institutions that heed the findings of this research can expect to understand why instruction and systematic approaches to serve students must be differentiated and diverse. More importantly, they will be aware of opportunities for systemic changes in their

departments to better serve diverse populations enrolled at their universities based on pillars of mind and strategies for success common to everyone they serve.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Kenneth L. Alford is a professor of church history and doctrine at Brigham Young University and a retired active duty Colonel in the U.S. Army.

Cathy Box is the director of the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship at Lubbock Christian University, where she also serves as director of the Quality Enhancement Plan and program coordinator for the curriculum and instruction master's program in the Graduate School of Education.

Vickie S. Cook is the executive director of the Center for Online Learning, Research and Service and a research professor in the College of Education at the University of Illinois Springfield.

Flower Darby is a senior instructional designer at Northern Arizona University.

Cynthia Haynes is an associate professor of horticulture at Iowa State University.

Fiona Hunt is an academic librarian-turned professor who teaches in the library and information technology program at the University of the Fraser Valley. She has 20-plus years of teaching experience and is passionate about maximizing student support and engagement in all her classes.

Claire Major is a professor of higher education administration at the University of Alabama. She is cofounder of the K. Patricia Cross Academy (**https://kpcrossacademy.org**).

Sara Marcketti is the director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Iowa State University.

Newton Miller is an associate dean in the College of Education at Ashford University.

Sarika Narinesingh and **Anne Song** teach in the Department of English and Communication at George Brown College.

Ann Marie VanDerZanden is the associate provost for academic programs at Iowa State University.

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