Bridging the Gap between Pre-Work and In-Class Sessions in the Flipped Classroom

ONE OF THE CHALLENGES of the flipped classroom is building meaningful connections between the pre-work and the in-class sessions. Opponents of the flipped classroom argue that information overload can easily occur in flipped classrooms (Benitez, 2014). Furthermore, while many instructors prefer to use short videos or online modules for the delivery of the pre-work, active learning strategies in the classroom need not be tech heavy. The greatest benefit to using the flipped classroom is the implementation of active learning strategies within the repurposed class time (Michael, 2006; Jensen et al., 2015). The techniques provided here can all be completed in your class with whiteboards, markers, and/or chart paper. In this article, I will share four different strategies that can help your students connect with your classroom pre-work, and embrace a constructivist approach that will help them apply their new knowledge.

Class discussion points

Class discussion points are a simple and effective method to connect classroom pre-work with in-class sessions. Embedded in your course pre-work, present your students with a question that is beyond a simple yes/no and may have multiple correct answers. During the pre-work, instruct them to jot down a few thoughts about the question that they can contribute to a class discussion. During class time, begin this discussion as a think-pair-share. This is an important point as it permits students who may be more introverted to share their ideas with their peers in a smaller setting. After allowing the students to discuss the question for 3-5 minutes, open the question up to the entire class and encourage alternate points of view. This activity is particularly appropriate at the beginning of the term to introduce active learning activities and establish your expectations for class participation.

Case studies

Case studies are an effective and interesting tool to connect pre-work and in-class work for your students. By using real-life examples from your practice or work, case studies can help promote authentic learning, critical thinking, and group collaboration. If used in combination with an online learning module, they can also serve as a bridge to your lesson. For example, I often introduce the case study at the beginning of my online learning module. As the students complete the module, they are able to answer some aspects of the case study on their own. Then, during the in-class sessions, students are divided into small groups to compare answers or explore new questions and concepts. This is an effective strategy in two ways: one, it allows students to connect the classroom pre-work to real-life examples, and secondly, it allows them to compare their level of understanding with their peers and work together to formulate a solution.

Students as teachers

I always say to my students "You know that you truly understand something if you can teach it to someone else." Using this framework, why not allow your students to teach some of the more challenging concepts from the course pre-work? To begin this active learning exercise, have a group discussion about the main take-home points from the class pre-work. Once the key topics are identified, divide the class into small groups. Assign each group one of the topics to explain to their peers in a short 3-4 minute lesson. In my courses, students have developed compare/contrast charts, diagrams, even short skits to convey challenging scientific concepts. This activity not only helps to clarify pre-work concepts, but also promotes collaboration, creativity, and presentation skills.

Birds of a feather

This activity, (adapted from Silberman, 1996), can be used to help students perform a type of interactive and collaborative concept mapping activity. Prior to class, write a few related terms or concepts individually on index cards. During class time, provide each student with an index card and instruct them to find others in the class who have an index card that relates to their index card. Ideally, the index card groupings should form related concepts in groups of three or four. After the students form their groups, instruct them to develop another concept or term from the course pre-work that would also fit into their category. Finally, have the students present their group and their "concept map" to the rest of the class. This is also an opportunity for you to correct any misconceptions. I like this activity because it promotes student interaction, gets them up and moving about the classroom, and helps students make connections between various concepts in the course.

The flipped classroom offers a unique opportunity to test-drive many active learning strategies. By connecting pre-work with in-class activities, you can help students create new knowledge and integrate this knowledge into their current schemata.

Mid-Term Week - February 20-24

WHITE BOARD
2016-2017 Publication Dates
First Monday of the Month

September 6	March 6
October 3	April 3
November 7	May 1
December 5	June 5
January 9	July 3
February 6	August 7

Newsletters Archive HERE

Center for Effective Undergraduate Teaching
Carnel Learning Center, Suite106.
Phone: 388-8426

Instructor Presence: How to Keep from Going MIA in Your Online Course

As an adjunct professor and one who works daily with faculty in helping them understand online education, I have noticed and heard of increasing numbers of professors going missing in action (MIA) while teaching their online course. This is particularly disturbing since engagement is the number one characteristic that faculty must strive for when teaching from a distance.

Being MIA can take several forms. There is the extreme of providing no communication, feedback, or encouragement to students. In this case, the online course becomes nothing more than a self-directed correspondence course. Another form is when feedback is either not constructive (perhaps an assignment is hurriedly graded) or arrives too late for the student to improve in subsequent assignments. How can students expect a genuine learning experience when the instructor does not provide the guidance and help that is so desperately needed in a timely and beneficial manner? Yet another form of going MIA is lack of presence in interactive assignments, such as blogs or discussion boards.

So what can we do?

1. **Set times to "go to class."** I always recommend to my students they imagine their online course as a face-to-face course and to "attend" on a regular basis two, three times a week. The same holds true for the professor. By "going to class," you can catch up on grading assignments, respond to emails, provide guidance for interactive assignments, and generate meaningful announcements that help keep the students on task. This will also prevent your own falling behind and becoming discouraged.

2. **Find ways to personalize your course with your presence.** Include media such as a welcome video at the beginning of the course, or insert media at the start of each module so that the student can see or hear you, and consider video/audio feedback for some assignments. In addition, occasionally include a video or audio segment within your announcement section so once again your students can make a connection with more than a computer. How does this help you not go MIA? When you personalize your course, the student will sense your presence repeatedly throughout it, and you will feel more invested in the course and more likely to remain engaged.

3. **Seek opportunities to engage students in creative ways.** Like any discipline, teaching online is not something one learns overnight. One professor I know writes personalized emails to two or three students a week with nothing more than a positive affirmation of some task the student performed that week. Another professor responds to writing assignments using a self-recorded Adobe Connect session so that the student can see and hear the critique. He finds this produces responses even more quickly than typing out or marking up a written assignment. Use a product such as VoiceThread to respond to discussion board postings—again, this is another way the student feels you are present by virtue of seeing and hearing you.

4. **Use discussion boards wisely and often.** Despite the calls for instructor-free student discussions, it is wise to intervene regularly, for several reasons. First, just as in a face-to-face course, you can prevent the session from going off topic. Students can quickly veer off point, but your presence helps keep them focused and on task. Second, students will know that you care about what they are saying. They know you will be looking at their responses—responses that can be praised, critiqued, or called upon for more critical thinking. And finally, by remaining active in a discussion board, you can monitor any inappropriate responses. Your presence will certainly alleviate the fear that you have somehow gone MIA.

5. **Remember that online does not mean off-line.** Just because the content, assignments, and assessments are online does not mean that the actual teaching and instructor presence can be off-line. One could have a beautifully designed online course, but with an off-line professor the learning experience will lack the depth, breadth, and richness of a true learning experience. You may not see your students, but that does not mean they do not see you or are not looking for you. Make yourself available through virtual office hours. Once a week, open up a synchronous session using Adobe Connect or a chat function where students may come to talk with you. Better yet, conduct a review session prior to a quiz or exam.

Remember that teaching online is not a spectator activity—it is a participative one!

Steve Dwinnells is director of the e-Campus Instructional Development Center at Eastern Kentucky University.

Steve Dwinnells; Instructor Presence: How to Keep from Going MIA in Your Online Course; Faculty Focus; February 3, 2017; [http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/keep-going-mia-online-course/] February 3, 2017

BRIDGING

References:
Benitez, J. (2014). Where is the pedagogy in the flipped classroom? Retrieved from https://www.aliem.com/2014/where-pedagogy-in-flipped-classrooms/ November 4, 2016.

Jensen J.L., Kummer, T.A., Godoy, P.D. (2015). Improvements from a flipped classroom may simply be the fruits of active learning. CBE Life Sciences Education 14: ar5.

Michael, J. (2006). Where is the evidence that active learning works? *Advances in Physiology Education* 30: 159–167.

Silberman, M. (1996). Active Learning 101 Strategies to Teach Any Subject. Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon.

Dr. Sarah McLean is an educator and e-learning coordinator with the Basic Medical Sciences Undergraduate Education Program at Western University, London, Ontario, Canada. She is also a teaching fellow with Western's Teaching Support Centre.

Sarah Mclean, PhD; Bridging the Gap between Pre-Work and In-Class Sessions in the Flipped Classroom; Faculty Focus; January 23, 2017; [http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/blended-flipped-learning/bridging-gap-pre-work-class-sessions-flipped-classroom/] February 3, 2017