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Flip Your Way Into the Future of Learning

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From death, fear, and loneliness, to stifling facial masks, toilet paper shortages, and overgrown hair, a COVID-19 silver lining is hard to find. Nothing was immune from the forced changes brought upon us by the pandemic, including, and perhaps especially, education. Moving forward, we should take advantage of this unprecedented disruption and reexamine the outdated ways in which we deliver content to our students. One way to make the most of technology and engage our digital natives is by “flipping content.” Flipping content personalizes learning while making better use of classroom time, ultimately leading to important ownership of learning that will serve students throughout their lives.

For the last four years, I have taught an online “Blended and Flipped Learning” class for K-12 teachers. Since the pandemic began, teachers who previously took those online classes reached out to tell me how prepared they were when they transitioned to either fully online or hybrid teaching. It was exciting to hear that these teachers smoothly transitioned due to having already learned flipping techniques including how to access and use free video tools such as Edpuzzle and Screencastify, which offered teachers the means to engage students at home in ways never imagined. Hopefully, this disruption of the “normal classroom” will inspire others to follow suit and finally retire centuries old teaching methods that are out of sync with our 21st Century learners.

For the purposes of this essay, we will explore flipping the classroom with video. At its core, flipping is about delivering content in a way that makes the best use of

class time. What language arts teacher does not want more time for meaningful discussions, creative projects, and peer workshopping? For most flips, recorded lectures/videos are assigned as what we formerly called “homework.” When students come to class (this works either in-class or in synchronous virtual sessions), they engage in activities and discussions that spring from the content viewed/engaged with at home. In an English Language Arts classroom, flipping can be particularly effective because of how well video pairs with reading and writing.

Flipping content with video provides additional advantages because students are naturally drawn to video. The 2019 Common Sense Census of Media Usage of Teens and Tweens reports that watching videos online is second only to listening to music. If we can tap into our students’ penchant for video, we might even find ways to inspire them to read books for pleasure, which has declined drastically in the last fifteen years (Twenge, et al. 338). As writing teachers, we are in a particularly fortuitous place to flip because we can easily design reading lessons that integrate video to engage all learners.

For some students, language arts homework is not only doable, but enjoyable. However, others might lose interest while reading alone and then cherry pick for answers. Crafty older students might skip reading entirely and simply Google and/or “share” answers. In contrast, in a flipped classroom, teachers are able to build accountability check points into the at-home assignment by using a platform like Edpuzzle. Check out this [example](#) that

highlights a scene in a modernized version of *Twelfth Night* (please note that the video can be set so that viewers cannot skip ahead). For an interactive lesson like this, upon student completion, teachers have the ability to instantly view all assessment data, including how long students spent viewing and answering questions, and ultimately, who “got” what.

When the class convenes (either virtually or face-to-face), the activities revolve around the pre-viewed lecture/videos. Students can dive right into the creation of concept/mind maps, interactive vocabulary reviews, or related journal writings; activities that can be used in both traditional and virtual classrooms. As Catlin Tucker outlines in [this post](#), there is no shortage of post-video activities to engage students. Students will have more time to collaborate on projects and subsequently develop higher-level thinking and communication skills (“Collaborative Learning”). The teacher now has the freedom to serve as an informed guide rather than the proverbial sage on the stage.

Picture a teacher lecturing about *Twelfth Night* in a traditional classroom. While some students try to keep up with what is being said (or spend the time dreading their turn to read), what about the students who fully understand? Boredom. To make matters worse, students might then be assigned homework on a topic that they don’t fully understand. Flipping with video allows for natural differentiation because students are in control of their learning due to the ability to watch and rewatch videos as many times as needed for understanding. In a traditional lecture, there is no “pause” button for students who need to hear what was said again or need a moment to reflect on what was said.

When students have control over their own learning, accountability and ownership are natural outcomes. As a first-year college

writing instructor, I know firsthand that some students lack the necessary self-efficacy to succeed in college. This unpreparedness did not happen overnight, but rather, is a by-product of twelve or more years of passive content delivery that failed to encourage meaningful engagement and subsequent ownership and pride.

Despite the positives mentioned, there is an obvious flipping obstacle for some: flipping with video usually requires at least a mobile device and internet access. According to US government data, between six to seven million households with K-12 students lack internet service (McGill). Looking to the future, the pandemic will hopefully bring awareness and viable solutions to the digital divide that undeniably exists in our schools. Workarounds for students who lack access are becoming more viable; in California, one million iPads with built-in LTE internet were distributed last September (EdSource.org). For now, students who lack internet service at home should be offered online access during library and/or study hall hours as well as before and after school. For younger students, the [in-class flip](#) is also an excellent workaround that offers the benefits of flipping via station rotations for the entire class.

Teachers at every level should consider flipped learning. In our ever-changing world, it is important that students embrace life-long learning, which all begins with ownership. When we think of the world our students will navigate as adults, it is one that is connected and collaborative. With the extra classroom time gained from flipping, teachers are able to offer students additional opportunities to collaborate on projects with each other, better preparing them to thrive in college and the workforce—really, in life in general. No matter what the future holds, the flipped classroom will help us all land on our feet.

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