You’ve Flipped Your Class and…
by John Graney

More than 4 years ago, I flipped my writing class with some trepidation. It was one of the best
decisions I have made. While I have experienced challenges and frustrations, now I work more
closely with my students, watch them take more responsibility for their learning, and observe
them do more creative work displaying deeper understanding.

In the process, I have evolved from just flipping my classroom to becoming a flipped learning
practitioner. Flipped learning is defined as

a pedagogical approach in which direct instruction moves from the group learning space
to the individual learning space, and the resulting group space is transformed into a
dynamic, interactive learning environment, where the educator guides students as they
apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter. (Flipped Learning Network,
2014)

In evolving toward flipped learning, we work to make group learning spaces better active
learning spaces. Three challenges face the flipped learning teacher: use of video, formative
assessment, and higher order thinking skills.

Video

As I described in a previous article (Graney, 2013) many resources can be used for making
videos, and more have become available. These resources have expanded with new computer,
tablet, and phone applications like ExplainEverything and Powtoon. Also, with more teachers
making videos, curating videos has become easier for the teacher facing the inevitable time
challenges. With a library of made and curated videos, we can now differentiate learning and
make feedback videos for specific purposes or students.

However, no matter how wonderful the videos are, the students may not watch them. Our
approach to this problem will revolve around two questions: How crucial are the videos to our
classroom activities? And how much responsibility do we give the students for their learning?

If we identify videos as crucial to our instruction, we can integrate the videos into our learning
management systems or use sites like EDpuzzle or Zaption. At these sites, teachers import a
video and insert questions at points during the video. When the students watch the video, the
video stops where the questions have been inserted, so the students cannot breeze through the
video while chatting or texting. If we prefer to give responsibility to the students, we can assign
the video, refer to it for review, and reference the video when a student experiences a problem
addressed by the video, thus addressing a need in a timely way.
We should keep in mind that the videos are meeting the first steps toward learning: remember and understand. The videos allow us to use the collective space, the classroom, for active learning. However, videos are not the only materials for the individual learning space. Textbooks, blogs, quizzes, research question, infographics, and slide shows provide other possible resources and variety.

**Formative Assessment**

We use formative assessment to help us identify student progress. The use of exit tickets, quizzes, and tests are what we might call formal formative assessment. With flipped learning or other active learning approaches where teachers spend more time at the side of their students, formative assessment occurs almost constantly. The effectiveness of formative assessment revolves around immediacy and individualization. Informal formative assessment occurs as we circulate among the students observing, suggesting, and interviewing. These types of in-class formative assessments can involve a three-part process: observation, analysis, and feedback.

**Observation**

With observation, we pay attention to each student in relation to their previous performances and current activity. We determine the differences between a mistake and an error (Fisher & Frey, 2014, p. 15). An aberration is a mistake, the head-slapping misspelling of a simple word, for example. Consistently failing to recognize a comma splice is an error that reveals faulty understanding. Along with these observations, we pay attention to individual affects and group interactions.

**Analysis**

Using the information gained from observation, we analyze the situation based on the student or students and lesson goals. Because each student differs, we use our knowledge about the student affectively and cognitively to determine what is going on with the success or failure in order to inform the feedback plan. In other words, at this point, we determine what future instruction adjustments are needed and how to provide feedback.

**Feedback**

Feedback may well be the most important element of this in-class formative assessment. Because the primary purpose of feedback is to cause thinking (William, 2011), we consider what kind of thinking we wish to stimulate. Two general types of thinking are cognitive and metacognitive. We provide cognitive feedback to nudge a student down a different path, as in “that is not a verb,” or to reorient a student, “remember the difference between a proper and a common noun,”
or “focus only on the nouns.” Metacognitive feedback involves asking questions that lead to analysis of personal learning, task demands, or knowledge gaps. We use questions like “What do you need to know to do this activity?”, “Where can you find the information to complete this task?”, or “What do you still need to learn to do this task?” Combing this feedback with the affective elements, we tailor our feedback to the student’s situation.

**Higher Order Thinking Skills**

While formative assessment helps us with understanding our students and their needs, a key challenge revolves around using the class time freed up by individual space activities. Flipped learning challenges us to provide students with meaningful activities without the teacher being central and scaffold the activities so they are accessible to all students. We want to encourage our students to use the higher order thinking skills, or HOTS, of application, analysis, evaluation, and creation.

Involving students actively presents the challenge of moving beyond worksheets. As we continue flipping, and especially as we work to incorporate the HOTS, we will look for ways to provide students with opportunities to be makers. This involves incorporating project-based and task-based learning activities, or, in other words, “to-show-what-they-know” projects. These can include creating slide decks, infographics, making videos, and hands-on projects. In creating these activities, we scaffold learning: by determining the elements of the knowledge/content students need to know, assisting the students by identifying and meeting their needs, giving them enough time to fail and succeed, and providing opportunities to revise.

The evolution from flipping the classroom to flipped learning encourages us to make our classrooms active learning spaces for both students and teachers to continue to grow and learn.

**References**


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