

## TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

### ***Student Preparation Is One Key to a Successful Learning Shift (a.k.a., “Flip”)***

First, about terminology: A “flipped classroom” is a “classroom structure that moves the lecture outside the classroom via technology and moves homework and practice with concepts inside the classroom via learning activities” (Strayer, 2007, p. ii). For understanding the concept, though, perhaps “shifted classroom” is really a more accurate description for what is happening — the means and place whereby students interact with the course material is shifted around.

No matter what it’s called, though, many would agree that it is the advent of technology which provides far more options for shifting learning activities from classroom to pre- or post-classroom time that has provided the impetus for more faculty to explore this form of teaching.

The “flip” or “shift” can be powerfully transformative for student learning for many reasons (see [“Teaching in the Flipped Classroom”](#)). However, you must prepare your students to work successfully as learners in a shifted/flipped classroom or face a potential backlash that dooms the enterprise from the start.

Here’s a comparison of students’ time shifts regarding learning activities in a non-shifted and a shifted classroom:

Traditional Classroom		Flipped Classroom	
<i>Activity</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Time</i>
Warm-up activity	5 min.	Warm-up activity	5 min.
Go over previous night’s homework	20 min.	Q&A time on video	10 min.
Lecture new content	30–45 min.	Guided and independent practice and/or lab activity	75 min.
Guided and independent practice and/or lab activity	20–35 min.		

*Source: Bergmann & Sams, 2012, p. 15.*

Notice the additional 40-55 minutes’ worth of time for guided practice, group work, dialogic interaction, one-on-one student-teacher interaction as the teacher moves around the room, and for other peer learning and student-teacher learning activities in

the flipped model compared to the purely information transmission model (i.e., lecture).

The added flexibility to use a wider variety of instructional strategies for a longer period of time allows the faculty member more options to build transformative learning environments and activities.

But there's a catch: Students are often not used to the shift, and they're frequently unprepared to succeed in such a learning structure. They may have little preparation as self-regulated learners, which means they're not aware if they're actually understanding the information with which they engage outside the classroom. Many students have poor time management skills, which means they don't "chunk" their engagement (to avoid cognitive overload), and they often procrastinate about out-of-class work (or don't do it), which adds stress to their experience of the class. They can be little practiced at interpreting and extracting meaning from text or audio/video, and this confuses them, often resulting in misunderstandings that then have to be corrected later.

In short, a shifted class can be laden with land mines for learners.

And they will blame the instructor for this as well as for "making them work harder to learn" compared to other classes.

Strayer (2007) and Johnson & Renner (2012) both indicate that the absence of student understanding about, and preparation for, working in a shifted model is a recipe for disaster because it constitutes "a failed attempt at the flipped method of instruction" (Renner, as quoted in Hennessy, 2012).

Two specific suggestions can help faculty prepare students to work in a shifted learning mode:

- Ease your way into shifting your classroom. It does not have to be "all or nothing" (Renner, as quoted in Hennessy, 2012). The first time you try this, select a few days across the semester that are going to be "flipped." This makes it easier on you as you build the resources for out-of-classroom work, but more important, it lets students understand how the structure works in a way that can allow a gradual adjustment.
- Have a discussion the first class day about the time expectations involved in a shifted classroom, especially regarding out-of-class work. If a 3-credit-hour class structure is supposedly predicated on two hours of outside work for each hour of in-class work, then a shifted model requires no more total time, *BUT* it does require that the two hours outside of class must be spent *doing the pre-class work!* (In truth, of course, a shifted model probably doesn't total nine hours of students' time per week, just as a lecture-based class doesn't garner that much time from students' lives, either, according to numerous studies — see the [December 2012 snapshot](#).) This preparatory heads-up combined with engaging out-of-class activities (e.g., video-recorded lecture snippets which are well executed, well-chosen texts which are more likely to hold students' attention and

guide their thinking) will lay the groundwork for more student acceptance of a shifted model.

Take baby steps when moving to this new instructional model! You will like it better that way, and so will your students.

Bergmann, J., and Sams, A. (2012). *Flip your classroom: Reach every student in every class every day*. Washington, D.C.: International Society for Technology in Education. (Available in the CETTL Library.)

Hennessy, M. A. (2012). New study on the flipped classroom by Concordia's Dr. Jeremy Renner shows mixed results. *Concordia Online*. Portland, OR. Available: <http://education.cu-portland.edu/blog/students-faculty-alumni/new-study-on-the-flipped-classroom-by-concordias-dr-jeremy-renner-shows-mixed-results/>

Johnson, L.W., & Renner, J. D. (2012). Effect of the flipped classroom model on a secondary computer applications course: Student and teacher perceptions, questions, and student achievement. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Louisville, Kentucky. Available: <http://theflippedclassroom.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/johnson-renner-2012.pdf>

Strayer, J. (2007). The effects of the classroom flip on the learning environment: A comparison of learning activity in a traditional classroom and a flip classroom that used an intelligent tutoring system. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. The Ohio State University, Columbus. Available: [http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc\\_num=osu1189523914](http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=osu1189523914)