

Tips to Help You Flip Your Classroom

Teachers offer their strategies for making the most out of the flipped classroom model.

Jason Kern began reading about flipped classrooms almost two years ago. Kern, who taught for a decade before becoming a technology director, says, "I always wanted to bring the real world into my economics classes but battled with having to deliver so much information. Flipping [the classroom] seemed to be the answer."

Flipping, as its name implies, involves transposing the traditional classroom paradigm of lecture during class and homework after class. In a flipped classroom, students watch the instructor's lecture outside of class via video and engage in discussion and hands-on activities, when appropriate, inside the classroom. Kern, for example, turned his lectures into podcasts, which students could then listen to as many times as necessary.

"I'd always lectured for 20 or 30 minutes and then had 25 minutes of discussion, but it irritated me that my students could never discuss the material," Kern says. "Once I started podcasting, our discussions were so much richer."

"The students told me they needed time to process the information. Flipping gives them time to synthesize."

Kern has heard from his former students, now in college, who tell him they listen to the podcasts, too.

Across the country, teachers are thinking about flipping their classes or are already giving it a try. Administrators and school leaders can help get teachers interested in trying this model by doing a few key things:

- Addressing issues of equity and access.
- Helping teachers rethink what happens during class and what homework looks like.
- Modeling the behavior for teachers.
- Making the production aspect of creating the videos as easy as possible.

Bridging the Digital Divide

Unfortunately, for some schools issues of equity and access pose challenges to implementing a flipped classroom. If students are expected to watch online video lessons outside the classroom, they need to have Internet access.

Some school districts are working with local telecommunication companies to offer Internet access for free or

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at a reduced cost, says Scott McLeod, director of innovation for Prairie Lakes Area Education Agency 8 in Iowa. McLeod says that other districts facing access challenges are tapping into Connect2Compete, a national nonprofit organization that provides discounted high-speed Internet and low-cost computers.

Alan Landever, director of technology at Fort Leavenworth School District in Kansas City, Mo., knows he may never have a one-to-one district—one in which all students have their own mobile devices or computers—but he doesn't let that stop him from encouraging teachers to flip their classrooms.

Landever encourages teachers in his district to use Moodle, the free open-source learning management tool, to revamp their curricula by integrating technology into lessons. One teacher in Landever's district uses Moodle to post videos. Every week, his students spend an hour in the district computer lab watching the videos.

If using a learning management system like Moodle seems too complicated, there are easier ways to make sure that everyone can watch lectures outside the classroom. Jonathan Bergmann, technology facilitator at the Joseph Sears School in Kenilworth, Ill., says, "We began in 2007, when 25 percent of our students had no Internet access at home. We just burned our videos onto DVDs and handed them out. It cost about 20 cents per student, and everyone had a DVD player."

Quick Tips for Administrators

- **Be supportive.** Use every opportunity to let teachers know that you have their backs.
- **Strengthen the technology infrastructure.** Figure out how to provide devices (this might require getting creative) or launch a BYOD (bring your own device) movement. At the least, make sure the library has computers. Perhaps most important, be sure families have Internet access outside of school.
- **Train your teachers.** From technique-heavy workshops to ongoing coaching, make sure that teachers get the support they need.
- **It's not one-size-fits-all.** Flipping is not appropriate for all subjects all the time. Ask teachers who are thinking about flipping to start with this question: What's the best use of your class time for this area?

Redesign Class Time

The success of the flipped movement is not about the videos; it's about what happens when the students return to the classroom after watching the videos.

"If you use that time to just do more 'sage-on-stage' stuff, you miss the opportunity," McLeod says. "Instead, you should be having rich discussions, doing hands-on or collaborative projects, and doing things that can't be done at home."

Make no mistake, this shift is monumental and requires rethinking the pedagogical model. Leaders have to do some professional development and continually monitor what's happening both inside of the classroom and at home.

"It's about how teachers build on the video," says Peter DeWitt, principal at Poestenkill Elementary School in New York and a blogger for *Education Week*. DeWitt says his teachers who have always focused on using small-group instruction were eager to try a flipped classroom model. Many of them say flipping has made it even easier to differentiate instruction and do project-based learning.

Jonathan Martin, an education consultant and former head of St. Gregory College Preparatory School in Tucson, Ariz., agrees. He says that his teachers are using the model to diversify instruction.

"I think there are good teachers who can't see the way to do more collaborative or project work because they feel so responsible for content delivery," Martin says.

At St. Gregory, teachers told him that flipping led to powerful changes in their classrooms. In calculus, for example, the teacher was able to support students as they tackled challenging problems. And in chemistry, students conducted much more complex and engaging lab experiments.

Kern says flipping leads to more interactive classes and is a great first step for teachers who want to have an inquiry-based class.

"It doesn't matter how you flip; it frees up class time for something other than lecture," Kern says. "You can go so much deeper into the subject. Once I began flipping, we were having discussions within two weeks that used to take until the end of the semester."

Practice What You Preach

Just as teachers are experimenting with flipping, some principals are using the flipped model as well.

When DeWitt started flipping faculty meetings last September, it took some time to catch on.

"At first it didn't go well, but now, when we meet, we go more in-depth on a topic," he says. "We're having real discussions about accountability—not just running through a list of dates."

DeWitt believes that it's difficult for teachers to try flipping if their administrator isn't doing it as well. Teachers

Resources for the Flipped Classroom

Try these tools to help you get started.

- **Clintondale High School:**
www.flippedhighschool.com
- **Flip Your Classroom: Reach Every Student in Every Class Every Day** (Copublished book from ISTE and ASCD, 2012):
www.ascd.org/flipyourclassroom
- **Flipped Learning:** www.flipped-learning.com
- **Flipped Learning Network:**
www.flippedlearning.org
- **Flipped Learning Network Ning:**
www.flippedclassroom.org
- **The Flipped Classroom Infographic:**
www.knewton.com/flipped-classroom

wonder, "If it's truly that great of an idea, why aren't you doing it yourself?"

"Be careful that it doesn't become yet another top-down initiative," DeWitt says. "Instead, try to naturally infuse it into what you're doing, and you'll give your staff the impetus to try it out."

To encourage his teachers to take risks, DeWitt adopts the attitude that if something fails, everyone learns and moves on.

Make Video Production Easy

McLeod notes that teachers don't necessarily have to create the learning resources their students will use. One of the best things we can do, he says, is to get children to make learning resources for each other.

"Everyone's excited about Khan Academy [the online, educational video library], but this can be even better," McLeod says. "Ask students to think about something they struggled with but eventually understood, and then work in small groups to make videos or other learning resources. Not only does this solidify their learning, but it also gives them a chance to be creative and deliver an authentic resource for next year's class."

"We have to get beyond the notion that a teacher is the sole finder/creator of learning resources. Kids can find them, create them, and share them, particularly if they have access

to technology. We're not tapping into that potential and power yet."

Martin agrees with McLeod that teachers don't need to do all the work. "We're at the cusp of a wide availability of high-quality lectures," he says.

"If I taught history, I'd love for my students to spend time seeing professors from Harvard, Stanford, Duke, etc., so that they could develop the skills of listening to a college lecture."

Does Flipping Deliver Results?

After Clintondale High School in Michigan became a 100 percent flipped school, state test scores improved in every subject.

"We saw an 11 percent increase in English language arts, a 5 percent increase in social studies, and 7 percent in writing," says the school's principal, Greg Green.

The graduation rate also improved, from 80 percent to 90 percent in two years, and the amount of disciplinary incidents dropped from 736 in 2009–10 to 187 in 2011–12. **EU**

—ELLEN ULLMAN



