Chapter 32
Active Learning in the Flipped English Language Arts Classroom

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ABSTRACT

This mixed-methods research study examines the engagement of high school students in a flipped English Language Arts (ELA) classroom. The students were enrolled in two sections of an Advanced Placement English Language Arts and Composition (AP Lang) course and were in the 11th grade. Forty-nine participants answered questions on a validated survey, and 8 participants took part in 2 focus groups. In addition, a researcher observed the flipped classroom and took field notes. Quantitative survey data was analyzed through STATA statistics software, and qualitative data was transcribed and coded. The results of the data analysis indicate that students had mixed feelings about the flipped method and its implementation in an ELA classroom. Survey data indicates general support for the method's principles but revealed mixed attitudes toward it as a method of instruction, especially in terms of it as a strategy for addressing all instruction in the ELA classroom. Qualitative data indicates that some students felt more engaged by the flipped method, while others did not. The results of the research indicate that the flipped method might be effective, in part, in an ELA classroom, but not as a sole means of instruction.

INTRODUCTION

Much is being made about the flipped model of instruction as a major reform initiative with the potential to reshape teaching and learning. Journals, newspapers, conferences, websites, podcasts, and blogs all tout the benefits of this new pedagogy as a paradigm shift that is reshaping learning and will reshape the classroom environment, reaching even the most reluctant of learners.

Teachers in English language arts (ELA) classes have begun using the flipped instructional model as a way to deliver fact-based content in a focused and efficient manner. Although there

is scant research on the efficacy of the model in the ELA classroom, a handful of teachers across the country have begun using the method in an attempt to better engage their students and, ideally, effectively address the curriculum. Their reasons are similar to those used by teachers in other content areas: they want more one-on-one time with students (Fulton, 2012); they want a classroom centered on inquiry and problem-based learning (Bergmann & Sams, 2012a); and they want to eliminate the constant homework struggle (Strayer, 2007). This chapter will provide a review of relevant literature and research and also present the results of an independent research study on the flipped method conducted in a high school ELA classroom. In addition, it will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using the flipped method in an ELA environment and will highlight strategies, activities, technologies, and tools that might be a part of an effective flipped ELA classroom.

Although many English teachers have attempted to incorporate new technologies into their classrooms using an integrated framework, such as TPACK (Koehler & Mishra, 2009), others have used Web 2.0 tools and the Internet in an attempt to "tick the box" on technology use and follow the guidelines for technology use in the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Although technology is one component of the flipped classroom, educators who want to integrate the method into an ELA classroom must ensure that the curriculum is driving the technology, not the other way around (Shelly, Gunter & Gunter, 2012). We believe that a flipped classroom is but one component of a well-stocked, ELA pedagogical toolbox. English teachers may choose to adopt or reject the strategy, as well as technological integration in general (Swenson, Young, McGrail, Rozema & Whitin, 2006). The research study presented in this chapter demonstrates that the combination of technology and a new pedagogical method can be engaging for students but should be implemented with intention, forethought, and care.

BACKGROUND

Making the Flip: The Origins of the Flipped Classroom Model

The "flipped classroom" moniker can trace its origins to the frustrations experienced by a university professor in a small, private college in Ohio (Baker, 2000). After noticing that his communication students were simply copying verbatim from PowerPoint slides without processing the information, Professor J. Wesley Baker at Cedarville University decided to post the PowerPoint slides onto the school's new computer network and have the students read the slides before coming to class. His idea, launched in 1995, was to use four key concepts to drive the model. The concepts were: "clarify, expand, apply, practice" (Baker, 2000, pp. 13-14) in order to shift his role from "sage on the stage to guide on the side" (Baker, 2000, p. 9). The students reviewed the material on the slides before class, and Baker (2000) then clarified and explained the concepts at the start of class, expanding on the basic information in the slides. The students broke into small groups to apply and practice the concepts. Baker (2000) surveyed his students at the end of the term and discovered that they felt they had learned a great deal from their peers through the collaborative activities. He dubbed the new process the "Classroom Flip" and presented a paper on the idea at a conference in 2000.

Simultaneously, another group of university instructors at Miami University in Ohio launched an "inverted classroom" (Lage & Platt, 2000) in an attempt differentiate their microeconomics lessons for different learning styles. The availability of technology was the spark that ignited the idea and allowed the researchers to turn the traditional classroom environment on its head by asking students to view PowerPoint slides and course content on a course website before coming to class. Once in class, the students worked in small groups to analyze the material. Lage,

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