



Flip Your Classroom Just in Time – A Beginner’s Guide

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Too many educators think that flipped classrooms merely replace the classroom lecture with an online video lecture. For instance, in her post for *gradhacker*, Andrea Zellner writes that “lectures can be captured on video for students to watch [at] home, freeing up class time for hands-on learning activities and discussion.” This observation is factual as far as it goes—the flipped classroom can use online videos—however, it overlooks the real value of the flipped classroom.

To understand why the flipped classroom is so revolutionary, we have to understand how it changes a basic task of education: echoing the knowledge and skill of the teacher in the students. In the past, this reproduction of knowledge and skill required close proximity to a specific teacher who had the knowledge and expertise that the students wanted or needed. Students had to gather with the teacher in the same place and at the same time to hear the master’s words or to watch the master’s demonstrations. After the teacher’s lecture or demonstration, the students would go home to practice the skill or knowledge through homework. Thus, knowledge and expertise were transferred locally and practiced remotely.

The 21st century Internet has changed all that. Now, knowledge and expertise can be transferred remotely and practiced locally. This profoundly changes the teaching/learning process, and every teacher should be aware of these changes, because in one way or another, these changes will insinuate themselves into the teaching/learning practices of everyone. Everyone.

Communicating knowledge and expertise remotely and practicing locally first changes our classrooms and the relationships between students and teachers. Once relieved of the burden of transferring information locally, **a teacher can stop being the sage on the stage and truly become the guide on the side.** The classroom can at last become student-centered as the actual activity in the class shifts from the teacher delivering content to the student practicing content. The classroom becomes more about what the student knows or can do and less about what the teacher knows or can do.

This is a profound shift, and some teachers may fear that they will lose their central position and their authority and control, but this fear is groundless. Teachers will still be the local, resident expert, but rather than bearing the burden of bringing all the value to the classroom, they can share that burden with students and with the Internet. The teacher remains the main go-to node in the class learning network, much as Google or Amazon are on the wider Internet, but students can also connect to and learn from other sources on the Internet and from each other. Now, instead of reacting in horror when asked a question she doesn't know, a teacher can smile and say, "I'm not sure, but I know where we can find out." **In a flipped world, the teacher's burden has shifted from knowing what to knowing where.**

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This is a much more tenable position for a teacher to maintain. Now, rather than being the sole source of knowledge and authority in a class, the teacher is one source among many sources—a privileged source, but still just one source. Now, the teacher is one learner among many learners—a more experienced and advanced learner than her students, no doubt, but still a learner like her students. And this may be one of the most profound lessons of the flipped classroom: that learning is a lifelong process, a game we never quit playing.

Flipping the classroom, then, is much more than putting a few video lectures on the Internet. In many ways, video lectures are basically old wine in new skins, but that can be a benefit as it provides an easier transition to the flipped classroom. A teacher can take something he already knows how to do—a lecture—and reframe it on the Net. Even the reframing is rather easy for anyone with the least technological resources and expertise. Lots of websites will show you how to convert a presentation, such as Google Presentation, PowerPoint, or Keynote, into an online presentation. Moreover, you can create more stunning and engaging video lectures with tools such as Apple iMovie or Windows MovieMaker. The kinds of video lectures that you make really are limited only to your interest and dedication. Any teacher with a point-and-shoot camera and a computer has all the tools they need to create video lectures, and as Khan Academy has already demonstrated, your videos do not have measure up to Hollywood production standards to be useful to students.

So think of video lectures as a first, small step in flipping your class, but hardly the last step. For instance, I use a class wiki ([Google Sites](#)) to host many class activities, but especially my just-in-time teaching processes. Each week, I post on the class wiki a set of readings, viewings, and exercises that students must complete prior to class the following week. The readings may be from the class textbook or from some Net resource. The viewings may be my own video lectures or another Youtube video, a TED talk, or a Screencast or Vimeo presentation. The resources are truly endless, but they are all focussed on whatever lessons I want the students to explore in the upcoming classes. I fold these assignments into a just-in-time process by sending along

an online assessment form (I use [Google Forms](#)) that students must complete prior to class. This assessment receives a participation grade and lets me know two things: who prepared for class and how well they prepared. Thus, I know how to manage the upcoming classes, devoting more time to concepts the students struggled with and less time on those concepts they mastered without me.

I also use blogging ([Google Blogger](#)) as a tool for flipping the class. I see what my students are learning outside of class, and I'm able to incorporate that into the class, adjusting the class to echo their interests. For instance, my students made lots of blog posts about the recent U.S. presidential election, which fed naturally into the documents they were writing in class. I have had similar success with Twitter.

Finally, I use [Jing](#) to grade their documents, which are all produced in [Google Docs](#). In Jing, I create a video screencast, which guides the students through their marked-up Google Docs. I talk about what they've done well and what they can improve. It's like a private one-on-one with each student, but it's all done remotely over the Net. My students seem to prefer it to visiting my office as they can review the video repeatedly and they do not have to drive to campus. Win-win.

So flipping the classroom is much more than merely putting a few video lectures online. It's part of the general movement in education to transfer knowledge and expertise remotely and practice it locally. It works better for me and my students, and I suspect it will work better for you and yours.