

# The Flipped Classroom Unplugged

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September 26, 2016

[The Flipped Classroom Unplugged: Three Tech-Free Strategies for Engaging Students](#)

By Barbi Honeycutt, PhD

Throughout this summer article series, we've addressed some of the most frequently asked questions about the flipped classroom in higher education. We've shared ideas for student motivation, student engagement, time management, student resistance, and large classes. Since this is the final article in the series, I reviewed my notes and the findings from the *Faculty Focus* reader survey on flipped classroom trends (2015), and there's one more topic we need to address: creativity.

*"I don't know if I'm creative enough to flip my class. How do you keep coming up with new teaching strategies and tools to engage students during class time?"*

In almost every workshop I teach, at least one participant asks me this question. And, the findings from the *Faculty Focus* reader survey highlight the scope of this concern among educators. Almost 79% of the survey respondents indicated that "being creative and developing new strategies and ideas" was sometimes, often, or always a challenge when implementing the flipped classroom model.

By design, the flipped classroom model challenges you to plan activities and learning experiences where students focus on applying, analyzing, and evaluating course content during class time. It does take a certain amount of creativity to flip your classroom, but it doesn't have to be intimidating. You can flip your class using simple strategies that allow for students to interact with the material and engage with each other.

For example, lately, I've been exploring the idea of flipping moments in our classes without using technology. What would happen if we got back to the basics with some of our activities and used everyday tools to engage students in higher levels of thinking? Would this help some of us overcome some of these feelings of intimidation and inspire us to be more creative? To start the conversation and get the creative ideas flowing, here are three "unplugged" flipped strategies you can add to your class to engage students.

### **Flipped Strategy: Adaptation of Muddiest Point**

#### **Tool: Index Cards**

"Muddiest Point" is a classroom assessment technique that allows students the opportunity to tell you what they are still confused or unclear about from the lesson (Angelo and Cross, 1993). Ask students to write their "muddiest point" on an index card. You may want to specifically focus their attention on the material from today's lecture, yesterday's lab, last night's homework, or any other learning experience you want them to examine. After your students complete the task, divide them into groups and tell them to analyze the cards based on some set of criteria. Ask them to look for patterns, common themes, categories, or outliers. Note how this adaptation of the Muddiest Point activity challenges students to move beyond just explaining what they don't understand and into the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. They are now summarizing, sorting, analyzing, and evaluating the cards while looking for connections and themes.

Bonus idea: After students sort the cards, challenge them to find the answers together. If you want to keep things "unplugged," tell them they can only use their textbook, hand-written notes, or other printed materials.

### **Flipped Strategy: Mind Mapping**

#### **Tools: Sticky Notes, Whiteboard, Markers**

Give each pair or group of students a stack of sticky notes and ask them to go to the whiteboard or chalkboard. Assign a topic related to the course material and challenge students to create a mind map of the topic using only their sticky notes. Explain that they can only put one idea on each sticky note, but they can use as many sticky notes as they need. Encourage them to use markers or chalk to draw lines and make connections between the ideas/concepts so you can see how their mind map is organized. By using

sticky notes, it'll be easier for the students to change their maps based on new ways of thinking.

Bonus idea: If you assign all groups the same topic, then you can ask them to rotate around the room and compare and contrast the different mind maps. You could give each group a different colored sticky note so they can add to another group's mind map, almost like a gallery walk but with sticky notes.

### **Flipped Strategy: Brainstorming Challenge**

#### **Tools: Pair of Dice, Worksheet**

Give students a case study, question, or problem that benefits from brainstorming. Then, divide students into groups and give each group a pair of six-sided dice. Tell students to roll the dice, and whatever number they roll represents the number of answers they need to generate. For example, if they roll a four and a five, they need to brainstorm nine possible solutions. If they roll a pair of sixes, they need to brainstorm 12 possible solutions. Give them a worksheet to record their ideas. Once groups have completed their challenge, ask them to switch their worksheets with another group and review their lists. This could be the beginning of a class discussion, or you could go another round and see how many more ideas students can add to another group's list.

Bonus idea: At the end of this activity, ask students to review all of the ideas, select the top two best solutions, and justify their decision.

Hopefully these unplugged flipped strategies will inspire you to be creative in your own way. Your flipped classroom may not look like your colleague's flipped classroom, and that's okay. It's not a "one-size-fits-all" approach. There isn't one "right" way to flip your class. The most important takeaway is to use the tools and strategies that make the flipped model work for you and your students.

Thank you for following the series this summer. I hope I have addressed many of your questions about the flipped model, and I look forward to hearing from you!

**Now it's your turn!** What "unplugged" flipped strategies have you used in your classes to enhance student engagement?

#### **Resources**

Angelo, T. & Cross, P. (1993). *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Jossey-Bass.

Honeycutt, B. (July 7, 2016). *Three ways you can use index cards to FLIP your class: Another "unplugged" flipped strategy*. Published on LinkedIn. Available online:

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/3-ways-you-can-use-index-cards-flip-your-class-barbi-honeycutt-ph-d-?trk=mp-author-card>

*Barbi Honeycutt is the owner of FLIP It Consulting in Raleigh, N.C. and an adjunct assistant professor at NC State University. Her new book 101 Unplugged Flipped Strategies to Engage Your Students. Connect on Twitter @BarbiHoneycutt and on her blog.*

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## The Flipped Classroom: Strategies to Overcome Student Resistance and Increase Student Engagement

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Join Barbi Honeycutt, author of the popular flipped classroom article series here on Faculty Focus, as she provides strategies you can use to create a successful flipped learning experience for you and your students. You'll find out how to identify the reasons that some students resist the flipped classroom model and how you can address those challenges to increase the likelihood that they will come to class prepared.

During this program, you'll learn how to structure preclass assignments so students are more likely to complete the work, and examine ways to support students as they discover what it takes to learn in the flipped classroom environment.

Here is some of what you'll learn during  enlightening, 60-minute seminar:

- How to get your students to understand their roles in the flipped classroom
- How fear and the "stages of grief" can affect student motivation—and how to reduce their impact

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