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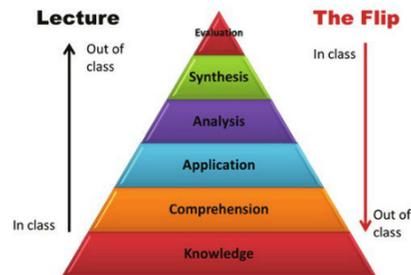
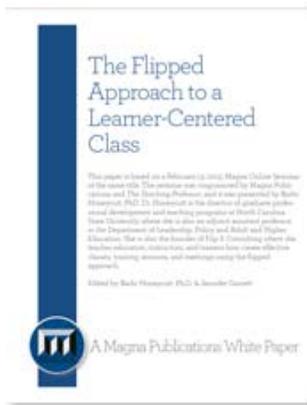
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Expanding the Definition of a Flipped Learning Environment

By: [Barbi Honeycutt, PhD](#) and [Jennifer Garrett](#) in [Instructional Design](#)

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The following is an excerpt from the whitepaper [“The Flipped Approach to a Learner-Centered Class.”](#)

The term flipped classroom has become a hot topic in higher education. Ideas about and opinions about flipped learning environments vary. Some consider it simply another way of talking about student-centered learning. Others view flipped classrooms as the most cutting-edge approach to learning. Still others see flipping as just another fad that will eventually run its course.

The most widely used description of the flipped class is a learning environment in which the activities traditionally completed outside of class as homework are now completed in class during instruction time. And, the activities traditionally completed in class are now completed on students’ own time before class. In many definitions and models, this means students watch a video of prerecorded lectures before class. Then, when they arrive to class, they work through assignments or activities with their peers and the instructor.

While that is probably the most familiar idea of the flipped classroom, flipping can mean more than watching videos of lectures. After all, a video of a lecture is still a lecture. One of the essential goals of the flipped classroom is to move beyond the lecture as the primary way to deliver information and structure class time. A well-developed lecture can be effective, but instructors rely on it too heavily and often to the exclusion of other more meaningful teaching and learning strategies. A flipped classroom allows instructors to introduce new ways of doing things. Yet adding something new generally requires letting go of something old. In the flipped classroom, instructors need to let go of their reliance on the lecture and focus on other ways to enhance learning by introducing active learning strategies that put students in the center of the learning experience.

There are other ways to define the flip. It can be described as moving from an instructor-centered learning environment to a student-centered learning environment. It could also be defined as shifting from individual to collaborative strategies. Although, it is possible to flip a class using individual activities such as quizzes,

worksheets, reflective writing prompts, and problem solving assignments. The key is to complete these activities during class time.

Flipping may or may not include technology. Bergmann and Sams (2012) explain, “Ultimately, flipping a classroom involves shifting the energy away from the instructor and toward the students and then leveraging educational tools to enhance the learning environment.” Keep in mind that educational tools include but are not limited to technology. While videos and other technological tools can be effective in a flipped classroom, they are not required. The true essence of the flip is really to focus on the student.

Bloom’s Taxonomy provides the framework for comparing the lecture-centered class to the flipped class. Instructors focus on higher level learning outcomes during class time and lower level outcomes outside of class. This means the flip could be as simple as watching a video before class and then attending class for more in-depth discussions that involve judging, analyzing, and creating. If students work with the fundamental material before class, they are better prepared to apply the information and engage in higher-level discussions with their peers and the instructor.

Another way to think about the flipped classroom is to focus on involving students in the process of learning during class. Dr. Barbi Honeycutt refers to the FLIP as Focusing on your Learners by Involving them in the Process. After all, flipped classrooms really are student-centered learning environments that incorporate active learning strategies during class time. This allows students to spend time problem solving, creating, critiquing, and synthesizing in class with their peers and with their instructor. Students are more active in flipped environments which add a new level of complexity to the classroom.

Regardless of the definition or framework an instructor uses to design the flipped classroom, the end result is a dynamic learning environment. Flipped classrooms are interactive— sometimes even ‘messy’—because students are working together and solving problems rather than sitting passively listening to a lecture. Flipped classrooms are also risky. Instructors relinquish a degree of control when the energy in the classroom shifts to the students. And, some flipped strategies may work while others may not. Instructors using any flipped model need to be aware of these challenges when integrating active learning strategies into their classrooms. However, careful planning can mitigate some of these challenges. For example, starting with a flipped lesson plan helps determine the appropriate tools and most effective strategies which can help instructors maintain control of the flipped classroom and ensure learning outcomes are achieved.

Perhaps one of the best places for instructors to begin is by re-thinking their role in the classroom. Sure, there are mini-lectures that need to be presented, but the majority of class time is spent on active learning. Instructors are not simply thinking about teaching in a different way; they are doing it! They are teaching differently using new approaches, tools, and strategies, and as a result, the lesson planning process and the assessment process will also change.

When planning a flipped lesson, an instructor should begin with the question, “What do the students need to DO to achieve the learning outcome?” This change in perspective will immediately flip the focus of the lesson since the question emphasizes the efforts of the learners, not the instructor. Instructors plan learning experiences based on what the students need to do and not what he or she (the instructor) is going to talk about. The instructor may lecture, but any lectures must be designed to help students accomplish what they need to do with the information or material to achieve desired learning outcomes, not just to disseminate information.

To order a copy of the whitepaper “The Flipped Approach to a Learner-Centered Class” [go here »](#)

Reference: Bergmann, J. & Sams, A. (2012). *Flip Your Classroom: Reach Every Student in Every Class Every Day*. International Society for Technology in Education.

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