

Chapter 100

Emerging Models of Practice in Flipped English Language Arts Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

This chapter reviews various flipped classroom models with particular focus on documenting them for further study and development. Much of the current research and popular news coverage regarding flipped classrooms only addresses one model; however, with multiple models in practice we have an incomplete picture in popular and academic literature of how the flipped classroom is being used by K-12 teachers. This chapter uses publications and blog posts to identify the multiple models of flipped English language arts (ELA) as they are documented by practitioners. Each model is categorized and defined in order to provide a better understanding for future practice and research, as well as determine common terminology. This chapter serves to alleviate the concerns that the current research and popular press are not accurately representing the flipped classroom. By identifying variations of the model and providing further recommendations on ways to advance the model, a more accurate picture can be documented.

INTRODUCTION

Much has been written in the news about the flipped classroom, which makes it difficult for educators not to take notice. As a new teaching method, many educators interpret its usage as a classroom method where students watch lectures at home the night before and engage in in-class activities about the subject matter the next day. This type of teaching method is actually a “flip” from traditional methods of teaching where the teacher lectures in class and then the students are expected to work on “homework” after class. However, flipped classrooms are much more complex, and adopting something to the classroom simply because it is attractive or different can be detrimental to education. As responsible members of the profession, educators must be more discerning with praise. Many new initiatives have been predicted to change education but few deliver on the promised outcomes.

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Due to the media's positive portrayal of flipped classrooms, there is a lack of concern about the effectiveness of the new teaching method and the expertise of those using it. Many of those promoting flipped classrooms have minimal experience using the method (Flipped Learning Network, 2014). As a result, someone who has only been "flipping" for a few months may consider himself or herself an expert. Therefore, misunderstanding about the teaching method's effectiveness are mounting in the education world (Talbert, 2014).

Although attempts have been made to evaluate the method further (Hamdan, McKnight, McKnight, & Arfstrom, 2013), a unifying voice is lacking to provide authentic, vetted examples of successful flipped classrooms. In addition, many proponents of flipped classrooms rely on anecdotal data to support their claims (Enfield, 2013). Even more elusive are the best practices examples in English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms. While a student-centered flipped classroom seems to be a good fit for the flipped classroom, the common misunderstanding is that the flipped classroom is still very teacher-centered (Talbert, 2014). This is a style that is not practiced in many ELA classes (Morris & Thomasson, 2013).

In order for the flipped classroom to evolve as a mainstream teaching method, it must be practiced, tested, and revised. The basic premise, or the "media's definition" of a flipped classroom, must be dismissed and replaced with hard evidence of its effectiveness. Assigning content to be completed before the next class period is not a new idea, and using video to deliver instruction has been around since the VCR (Strayer, 2012); however, the application of the model in practice is often different from the researched definition (Johnson, 2012). Teachers that are effectively using the flipped classroom focus less on the video component of the class and more on the classroom activities in which students are engaged (Salifu, 2015). Determining whether or not flipped classrooms produce results is the most important aspect of examining the model. Researchers and practitioners have a responsibility to fully grasp the concept before it becomes mainstream. Asking questions about the model are important, but without an accurate understanding of the method, it is hard to determine what the questions may be.

The biggest misunderstanding seems to be that there is only one way to flip a class (Bergmann & Sams, 2014). In truth, there are multiple variations or models being practiced by teachers who are using the flipped method. Some teachers utilize many common elements of a flipped classroom, but do not identify themselves as flipped classroom teachers (Baker, 2013). Anyone can self-identify, which is a source of much of the confusion. This chapter intends to advance the process of identifying legitimate models of flipped classroom practice to eliminate some confusion that will help progress the movement in a more discerning way.

DEFINING THE FLIPPED CLASSROOM

It may seem redundant to define the flipped classroom in a book about the flipped classroom; however, it is important when describing an evolving concept to establish a working definition, or rather, an informed working definition situated in the context described in this chapter. To do so, it is important to share the history behind the flipped classroom definition so that the reader has a better understanding of the author's viewpoint. That being said, the simplest definition proposed in the research literature was not originally of the term "flipped," but instead of the "inverted" classroom. Lage, Platt, and Treglia (2000) stated that, "Inverting the classroom means that events that have traditionally taken place inside the classroom now take place outside the classroom and vice versa" (p. 32).

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