Sabbatical Leave Report for Fall 2018

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During my Fall 2018 sabbatical leave, I completed the The Flipped Learning Certification Level - 1 course through the Flipped Learning Global Initiative (FLGI). In addition (and with the help of talented family members), I created my own lightboard and began filming original flipped video content to use in future classes. I embarked on this sabbatical with a plan to flip selected content across different classes; by the end, my goal had changed to beginning the process of flipping one class completely. This is because the FLGI course taught me that flipped learning is not simply a method for delivering course content. Flipped learning is a meta-pedagogical course design that frees up classroom time for active learning.

Overview of Flipped Learning

The FLGI course taught me that flipped learning requires a complete make-over of traditional learning. We now have technological tools to deliver the lecture material through videos. This is the material that is easiest for students to consume. And, if students need more time to absorb the material, they can pause, rewind, or rewatch videos as often as necessary. Where students need professors' direct help the most is at the higher-levels of thinking, such as application, evaluation, and creativity. Because the video lectures are watched before class, this free up class time so that professors can facilitate and guide students' deeper learning of the course material. The FLGI suggests using the term *individual space* to refer to activity students engage in outside of class, while the term *group space* refers to activity designed and facilitated by the professor during class meetings.

The FLGI course emphasizes important guidelines to follow when creating videos to be consumed by students in the individual space. It is suggested that professors keep their videos short, covering one topic per video in less than 20 minutes. There will be several videos for each chapter/module of the class. Students respond best when videos are created by the professor teaching the class. It builds trust because students see the work the professor has put into it and how the videos are tailored specifically to the class. To encourage active viewing of the videos, professors can embed questions within the videos that must be answered for the video to continue.

It's critical that professors clarify for students how a flipped class differs from a traditional class, especially in regards to expectations about students' use of the individual space. Watching the videos before class is required; the FLGI recommends that instructors embed questions in the videos and track students' viewing. At the start of the class meeting, those who have not watched the videos must do so before they can join their classmates in the group space work. Ideally, there are computers/tablets and headphones in the classroom, allowing students to catch up without disturbing those already at work on group space projects. The FLGI also recommends that professors teach students at the start of the term how to engage with the videos, so they understand how to watch, take notes, and answer embedded questions. It's a very different experience than passively watching videos on YouTube!

The course emphasized the importance of getting student "buy-in" for flipped learning. Especially among high-achieving students (i.e., those who have mastered their approach to traditional learning) flipped learning might be viewed with suspicion.

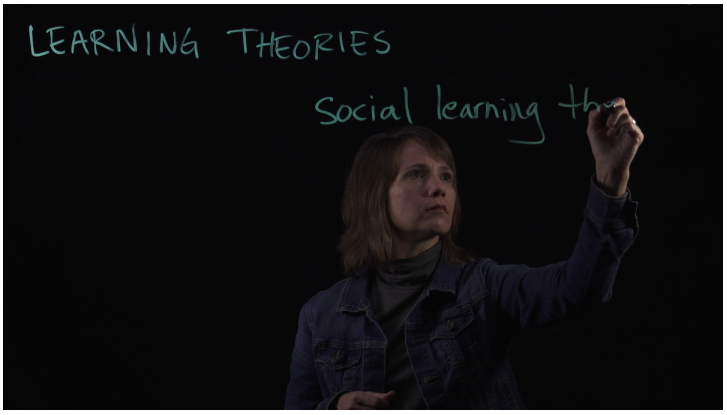
The FLGI suggests we highlight the following benefits that students in flipped learning classrooms experience: (1) more interaction with professor, (2) stronger student/teacher relationship, (3) student control of the pacing of lecture content as they pause/rewind/ rewatch videos, and, because traditional homework often becomes work completed in the group space, (4) less time required outside of class to be successful. Finally, professors must strive to design group space activities that are interesting, useful, and rewarding for students. Once students have firsthand experience of the group space, they will find it much more stimulating than passively taking lecture notes in a traditional lecture.

Creating Videos for the Individual Space

The FLGI offers many specific recommendations for making effective flipped videos. They have found that the best flipped videos are short (i.e., under 20 minutes), focused, and visually minimalistic. The text in the video should be sparing and should appear at the moment the content is discussed. Animation should be avoided unless it is central to the concept being taught. The professor should speak in a conversational tone and have a style similarly authentic as the way they present face-to-face. Excellent professors giving face-to-face lectures stumble on their words a bit or have other brief glitches on a regular basis. When making a video, a perfectionist could agonize over every extra “um” or any other slight error or glitch, spending lots of time editing these out. To get a flipped class off and running, professors do not have time to edit their videos this extensively. In fact, many members of the FLGI community strongly recommend recording a video lecture in one take, with only the most minimal of editing later. Furthermore, experienced instructors of flipped classes report that their

students appreciate video lessons that feel as “real” as a face-to-face lecture.

Regarding the technical aspects of making videos, the FLGI suggests that It’s especially important to invest in tools to produce clear audio, such as a high-quality microphone or lapel mic. Otherwise, flipped videos can be created with very basic tools, such as a smartphone, tripod, and a whiteboard. Screencasting via a computer, tablet, or interactive whiteboard is also an option. However, the most highly recommended approach is to use a lightboard, which functions like an invisible whiteboard with the instructor looking directly into the camera and writing text with neon dry erase markers onto a low-iron glass board. A black backdrop and proper lighting allow the written words to show up on the glass as if they were written in the air. Of course, in the raw footage the writing is backwards, but video editing programs permit the footage to be reversed so that the words appear in the proper orientation and order.



I am neither left-handed nor writing backwards! I reversed the image when I edited the video.

The descriptions and demonstrations of lightboards intrigued me. I had not predicted that making a lightboard would be part of my sabbatical, but it was during the process of taking the course that I became convinced it was what I wanted to do. Thankfully, I have a husband with filmmaking skills and a father-in-law who is a master woodworker, so together we were able to make this vision a reality. I found the proper glass to use (low-iron is best for maximum reflectivity), my husband set up the lighting,

and my father-in-law constructed the freestanding frame. My husband helped me set up a studio in our garage, and I began to make my own videos. He also taught me how to use Adobe Premiere to edit the videos.

My Lightboard Studio

By the end of November, I was ready to start filming. With my husband's help, I set up a studio and learned the basics about lighting and operating the camera and microphones. I began creating flipped video content for my Lifespan Development class. It was a steep learning curve, combining my knowledge of the topic with the advice to be brief, straightforward, and non-perfectionistic when recording. Learning how to edit also took some work, especially since I realized that the software I wanted to use was not available for my laptop. Thankfully, my husband has the software on a desktop computer I could use at home.

I am glad that I decided to invest the time in creating a lightboard and studio, even though the time required to do took away from my time to film. If I had used a traditional whiteboard with a smartphone, I could have recorded many more videos by the end of my sabbatical. Doing so would require me to have my back to the camera as I write, however, whereas the forward-facing lightboard keeps the professor facing the student at all times, another another element that the FLGI suggests increases students' motivation and engagement with these video lessons.

Planning Work for the Group Space

Although flipped learning requires the professor to spend a lot of time making videos, the ultimate reward is the time gained with students in the group space. Class meetings are reserved for active learning, because the direct instruction has already occurred before and outside of class. The group space work can include guided practice, where the professor helps the students as they engage in an activity. Peer tutoring is also an option, where students can help each other with the work. Small group work is another possibility, where students work collaboratively on an activity together. Much of this work can be done with students in interaction with one another, but sometimes individual student work is appropriate as well. I am especially excited about the possibility of shifting assignments into the group space, either as brainstorming and initial work for a project to be finished in the individual space (e.g., a paper) or for assignments designed to be fully completed in the group space. This is a benefit for students on many levels because they can have more interaction and guidance from their professor and, if relevant, their peers. This can also lighten students' load in the individual space, as some of the work previously completed at home can occur during the group space instead.

The FLGI course offered many suggestions for group space work in science classes such as psychology. We can conduct experiments in class, providing hands-on experiences in how to think like a psychological scientist. I have tried to squeeze small versions of experiments into my traditional classroom, but there is never enough time to dive as deeply into the material as I would like. I could also "flip" some of the experiment instructions so that students come to class ready to participate. I'm

intrigued to try out many methods of inquiry that professors have had success incorporating into flipped classes, such as Ramsey's Cycles of Learning. This involves introducing a problem in the group space, teaching relevant course material in a flipped video, then applying that course material to an activity in the next group space meeting.

Professors may also create methods of flipping feedback on assignments. Instead of written comments on papers that may or may not be read by students outside of class, I could screencast a very short video narrating my feedback as I mark up their paper with a stylus. To insure that the feedback is meaningful and fully absorbed, students in the group space could watch their flipped feedback video (privately) and discuss it with me.

In Conclusion

This sabbatical provided me with a solid start to flipping a class. I thought that I would learn useful methods to enhance my teaching. This I did. But I was pleasantly surprised to find that the FLGI course inspired me to completely rethink the way I can use time to best benefit students. One of the deepest insights I gained was that students need face-to-face contact with instructors the most when they are engaged in the higher-order thinking required of active learning activities. I hope to flip my Lifespan Development class at some point in the near future. I am off to an excellent start, thanks to this sabbatical. It is hard for me to imagine how I ever would have found the time to learn the philosophy and techniques of flipped learning *and* to prepare equipment and a filming studio during a typical semester or break. I am very grateful to my deans, Dr. Gloria Miranda, who approved the sabbatical request, and Dr. Chris

Gold, who became our dean and dealt with the practicalities of my absence during the Fall 2018 semester. I thank the Sabbatical Leave Committee for granting me this opportunity. I am grateful to my colleague and sabbatical advisor, Dr. Renee Galbavy, whose enthusiasm was so encouraging. Finally, I am thankful for my husband, Matt Radecki, and my father-in-law, Ronald Radecki, whose efforts made it possible for me to make lightboard videos.