Embracing Texting during Class

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If you want to get your students’ attention, try listing this course policy in your syllabus: “Texting during class is encouraged.” Most of us wouldn’t dare. We know firsthand how distracting cell phones can be. But with so many students disengaged and increasing pressure to create more student-centered learning environments, maybe we should stop thinking about texting as a problem and start seeing its potential as a solution.

We object to cell phones because they distract students from the more important cognitive tasks at hand. So we ban their use in the classroom and then spend a lot of time and energy trying to enforce that policy. We’d like to suggest an alternative. Cell phones can be used to focus students’ attention on key issues. Texting provides a quick, easy, and cost-effective means of encouraging active participation in class—something of value in any class but particularly in larger ones.

There are a number of websites and applications currently available to facilitate the educational use of texting in the classroom. Two that are particularly helpful for maximizing engagement in the classroom are Wiffiti (http://wiffiti.com) and Poll Everywhere (www.polleverywhere.com).

Wiffiti is an interactive, dynamic, e-bulletin board that allows students to “write” on it via texting. Instructors can create a Wiffiti space and project it onto a screen during class time. Once a student texts Wiffiti, the student’s message appears on the projected screen within seconds and the whole class sees it. As a complement to class lecture, the Wiffiti can be used to do the following:

• Address student questions during lecture—Faculty can prompt students to post questions and comments as they arise. Then, the instructor can either address the posts or prompt other students to address them. This is especially helpful in large classes or for students who are hesitant to participate in class. Additionally, it allows professors to monitor how well students are mastering course material.

• Brainstorm—The students can text ideas during targeted discussions that require in-class brainstorming. Texting increases efficiency as the instructor is no longer trying to list the ideas on the board and students are not talking over one another.

• Provide summaries—Faculty can ask students to periodically summarize the key points of a lecture segment. This allows the instructor to review those summaries and clarify main issues or misunderstandings.

In contrast to Wiffiti, Poll Everywhere displays students’ responses chosen from a predetermined list of options. Using Poll Everywhere, the instructor creates questions and students are able to text vote their responses; as the votes are received, the site automatically compiles and displays them. Poll Everywhere can foster active participation through several options:

• Discussion starters—Faculty can create a poll of common misconceptions from which students can explore misconceptions prior to beginning new lecture material. Additionally, due to the anonymity of the answers, students are more likely to answer honestly rather than modify their responses based on the answers of their peers.

• Formative quizzes—Periodically, instructors can create polls to check students’ levels of understanding prior to moving forward in the material.

• Exam reviews—Students may be given a poll of multiple-choice items relevant to an upcoming exam. This interactive review creates opportunities to practice taking exam questions as well as increases students’ awareness of testing expectations.

These Web 2.0 applications are just a few of the many options available to instructors looking for creative ways to engage students during class. Please share your favorite application in the comments section on our blog (www.grandcanyonpress.com/blog).
From the Last Five Years to the Last Two Semesters: An Update

By Barbara A. Mezeske, Hope College, MI

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The last time I wrote about retirement (The Teaching Professor, March 2010), I could count the remaining number of semesters on the fingers of one hand. Now in my last year, I’d like to offer observations about the final lap.

I’m finding that staying fresh in the classroom is both possible and fun. This fall, I signed up to develop a brand-new class that was a real stretch for me. Teaching this class is energizing, but it’s also making me regret—just a tiny bit—that I won’t be around to do it better the next time. (I am leaving copious notes for my successor.) I’ve also found a new way to approach an old course, incorporating a messy community service project that requires the cooperation of a local after-school program and a lot of advance troubleshooting. Would I have tried this earlier, if it had not taken so much extra time to set up? Maybe. And perhaps that is the lesson: if we behaved differently that I won’t be around to do it better the next time. (I am leaving copious notes for my successor.) I’ve also found a new way to approach an old course, incorporating a community service project that requires the cooperation of a local after-school program and a lot of advance troubleshooting. Would I have tried this earlier, if it had not taken so much extra time to set up? Maybe. And perhaps that is the lesson: if we behaved differently.

Some of my behaviors in my department have changed.

• I am feeling remarkably liberated and wondering why tenure did not do that for me. It is not that I am speaking out in radical ways, but I am speaking more openly and frankly. Because LGBT issues are currently hot on my campus, I have posted this sign on my office door: “I support academic freedom and a safe environment for all people on campus.” I am less concerned than previously with giving offense and with playing departmental or administrative politics. Genuinely being oneself ends up being much less stressful—I should have acted on this lesson earlier.

• I have become more active in recruiting majors from my courses this semester, feeling a real urge to pass on to young people the parts of my discipline that I love.

• I am rehearsing for my new life as an independent writer, by writing a departmental blog about our most basic course—first-year writing. I am practicing what I know about audience, organization, and development of ideas.

In some ways, I feel exactly like our graduating students. Like them, I am looking forward to what comes next, even if I have not yet figured out a good answer when a colleague gasps, “What are you going to do with yourself?” I have to practice what we so often preach to undergraduates: assess your skills, write your résumé, present yourself in a marketable way, and network everywhere. I find myself asking nonacademic friends and acquaintances what kinds of writing would help them in their jobs or in their projects. My dentist gave me a line on a community health care program that needs some public relations work. One of my bridge partners connected me to a memoirist in need of an editor.

All this comes down to crafting a new way to be what I have always been: a good teacher. The awareness of time’s passage, of each piece of the semester being my final chance to do something right, has made me mindful of what we should be doing throughout our careers: remembering that what we do every day is our calling.
Of Mice and Men: Using a Book Club to Improve Teaching and Learning

By Kathryn Birkeland, Betsy Knowles, James Murray, and Laurie Strangman, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse murray.jame@uwlnx.edu

Effective teaching requires continual reflection about teaching techniques, strategies, and materials. This necessary reflection can be prompted by attending teaching conferences, classroom observation, formal and informal assessment, and reading research on teaching and learning. All these activities can be done on your own, but all are more effective when undertaken with a fellow teacher. However, few of us find the time to sit down with colleagues and thoughtfully discuss teaching. Instead, too often we only participate in a once-a-semester teaching in-service activity.

Regular discussions about teaching and learning are difficult to organize, for several reasons. It’s hard to coordinate schedules and motivate already-busy faculty to attend another meeting. It’s also challenging to come up with topics for these meetings and have all participants prepared to participate in advance. In the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UW-L) Economics Department we overcame these hurdles by establishing a “book club,” devoted to reading and discussing books on teaching and student learning.

Our book club has four to six regular members, all of whom teach economics courses. We meet for an hour, once every one or two weeks, at a coffee shop on campus, and we come prepared to discuss one or two chapters of the book we are reading. Usually we start by talking about specifics in the chapter, and that leads to sharing teaching techniques (some new ideas, some tried and true) that correspond with theory and evidence from our reading. Most often, the ideas we share represent small changes. They are things that can be implemented without altering the syllabus or taking time away from the other objectives we need to accomplish. The books we have read draw on cognitive and educational psychology and focus on how the mind works, identifying those conditions conducive to learning. The books we’ve read so far are listed in the reference list. Our discussions lead us to think carefully about the activities and assignments we give our students. We talk about how each could be adjusted to more effectively add to students’ long-term understanding.

These discussions have transformed how we think about our teaching. We find ourselves regularly analyzing our teaching styles and strategies. One of our members, who has more than a decade of college teaching experience, reports that this book club has led him to make more changes in his teaching than anything else has in the past.

What are the ingredients for a successful book club? Here’s what we think makes our book club work. We’re all from the same discipline and teach similar or common courses. This makes it easier to develop and share strategies. Because our classroom experiences are similar, we don’t have to spend time explaining the context to each other. Our meetings and readings involve small-time commitments. In fact, so far, we’ve made it through one book per year. However, we discovered that what we cover in our meetings is not as important as getting together and talking.

Two things we learned from Willingham (2009) are that people add to long-term memory what they think about on a regular basis and that successful learning takes repetition and practice throughout a semester. Not surprisingly, this is true for us as instructors as well. Regularly returning to literature about how students learn and regularly discussing effective strategies for our classrooms have proven more influential than sporadic teaching conferences, although our book club may prove to enhance the value of these other activities.

Another factor that has contributed to our success is meeting at a coffee shop in a different building instead of in a conference room near our offices. Moving to a different environment seems to energize and focus the discussion, an idea that was also supported by research we read which suggested that students learn better when changing environments. The UW-L Center for Advancement of Teaching and Learning supports our endeavor by suggesting books and lending us copies. If you don’t have this support and are wondering what a group on your campus might read, we recommend the books we’ve read, listed below as references.

Now in our third year of the book club, we have started a blog (http://econbookclub.posterous.com) for our department. We are using it to share ideas from our meetings as well as other educational resources. Interested readers might consider visiting the website in future semesters to find other books we recommend and get a glimpse into how we apply the readings to our classrooms. In conclusion, this book club has provided us with an enjoyable, leisurely, and productive opportunity to reflect on our experiences with teaching and learning. We are writing to recommend the activity to others.

References


Using Reading Prompts to Encourage Critical Thinking

“S”tudents can critically read in a variety of ways:

- When they raise vital questions and problems from the text,
- When they gather and assess relevant information and then offer plausible interpretations of that information,
- When they test their interpretations against previous knowledge or experience …,
- When they examine their assumptions and the implications of those assumptions, and
- When they use what they have read to communicate effectively with others or to develop potential solutions to complex problems.” (p. 127)

And don’t we all wish our students read this way! Unfortunately most of them don’t, and the challenge is finding those strategies and approaches that help them develop these sophisticated reading skills. Terry Tomasek, who crafted this description of critical reading, proposes one of those kinds of strategies.

She uses reading prompts. “The purpose of these reading/writing prompts is to facilitate personal connection between the undergraduate student and the assigned text. The prompts are simply questions used to orient students with a critical reading stance and to guide their thinking as they read.” (p. 128) Her goal in using the prompts is to help students identify the big ideas rather than just “mine” the text for facts and details. She’s not anti facts and details, but she thinks that’s mostly what students read for and the big ideas are what prompt the reflection and analysis typical of those who read deeply and think critically.

Tomasek develops prompts designed to promote a range of critical-thinking responses. The categorization she has developed is neither linear nor hierarchical, meaning the prompts can and should be used in different orders. Here are her six categories and some of the sample prompts contained in the article.

Identification of problem or issue—This “lens” is used to create a “need to know” viewpoint for readers. (pp. 129-130)
- What problem is the author identifying? Who does the problem relate to?
- For whom is this topic important and why?

Making connections—These prompts help students think critically about course content, what they are reading, and their own knowledge. The goal is to get students to integrate their experiences with what they are reading.
- How is what I am reading different from what I already know? Why might this difference exist?
- What new ideas are here for me to consider? Why am I willing or not willing to consider them?

Interpretation of evidence—These prompts are best used when students have been assigned a case study, have viewed a video clip, or are reviewing each other’s work.
- What inferences can I make from the evidence given in the reading sample?
- What relevant evidence or examples does the author give to support his or her justification?

Challenging assumptions—The goal of these prompts is to encourage students to identify and critique assumptions.
- What kind of assumptions is the author making? Do I share these assumptions?
- What information builds my confidence in the author’s expertise?
- If the opportunity arose, what questions would I pose to the author?

Making application—Here students are challenged to use what they have learned.
- What advice could I add to this reading selection? On what basis do I give this advice?
- Looking toward where I want to be in two years, what suggestions from the reading make the most sense to me?

Taking a different point of view—Students develop critical perspectives when they are encouraged to consider diverse ideas.
- What would I point out as important about this topic to others who either question or disagree with my point of view?

As for the mechanics, Tomasek assigns one reading prompt at the time the reading assignment is made. Students respond in one or two paragraphs prior to the next class. They are asked to share their responses to the prompts in a variety of ways. They might post them on a Blackboard discussion space and then respond to the comments posted by other classmates. This electronic exchange takes place before class. Tomasek may use material from these exchanges when she discusses the reading in class. Other times students email their responses to other students, who respond by asking clarifying questions. This kind of exchange then happens face-to-face at the beginning of class. Or students may simply write out their responses to the prompt and email them to the instructor, who uses them in a variety of ways as the content is presented and discussed in class.

Tomasek instructs students not to worry about grammar, punctuation, or paragraph structure. What students are being asked to prepare is not a writing assignment, but a response to an attempt to help them uncover the big ideas and see how they relate and can be applied. When students submit their responses, the feedback provided is limited and the papers are not graded. However, Tomasek does keep track of students’ responses, seeing that they are doing the reading and responding thoughtfully.
Gateway Criteria: Minimum Standards before an Assignment is Graded

Do you sometimes (maybe regularly) get papers from students filled with spelling, punctuation, proofreading, and other more serious grammatical problems? Yours is not an English class and you have other content to teach, making it difficult to address these writing problems. And yet leaving them unaddressed puts students in jeopardy. They may not believe us, but the fact is we still live in a culture that “sorts out” people based on their use of language. Maybe that won’t be the case in 50 years, but today it is a reality. A student who can’t put together an error-free résumé or cover letter isn’t likely to get many interviews or good jobs.

Barbara Walvoord and Virginia Anderson suggest a solution in their book on grading (reference below). At first pass it may seem a bit harsh, but it is a solution that works. They recommend creating what they call gateway criteria. Simply put, these are certain requirements that must be met before the paper is even graded. If those standards for things like word processing, labeling graphs, grammar, punctuation, and so forth are not met, the paper is handed back with an F and instructions to revise and resubmit for grading.

A policy like this is fair only if the gateway criteria are clearly laid out before the assignment is submitted. They should be given to students and/or posted on the course website, and teachers need to remind students about them regularly. Walvoord, who writes of her experience using the gateway criteria, explains that she also gives students information about the Writing Center, including its hours, Web address, and location on campus. She points out that’s what people in writing centers do: they help students meet the requirements of standard written English. Her students also have the option of submitting a draft of their papers at least 24 hours before they are due. She does not edit these drafts or mark errors, but she does tell students whether the paper has met the gateway criteria. If it does not, again she lets students know that help is available in the Writing Center and she identifies composition sources where students can find relevant information.

Walvoord does not apply the gateway criteria policy to other work in draft form, in-class writing, or other informal writing activities. It applies only to finished, formal work.

“The result of this gateway policy is that virtually all the final papers Walvoord receives make it through the gate.” (p. 58) And Walvoord has used this policy with first-year students as well as those in upper-division courses. If the policy sounds viable but you’re still having some qualms, consider implementing it in an upper-division course. Do so recognizing that you will have to devote time to explaining the rationale behind the policy. This isn’t an exercise of teacher power. It isn’t because the teacher is lazy and doesn’t want to correct mistakes on papers. It’s because on that first job, when the student (now employee) submits a report, prepares a proposal, or posts minutes from a meeting and there are these kinds of mistakes, there will be consequences far worse than getting an F. Bosses will not return the paper and ask for corrections. They will come to unfavorable conclusions about the potential and worth of that employee.

Walvoord and Anderson also point out that you can set the gateway criteria at different levels for different groups of students. They suggest that special attention be paid to those learners for whom English is a second language. The criteria may be set lower for these students, but only temporarily, because these learners will be expected to meet the same standards in the world beyond the college or university. “The idea is not to hand out a lot of F grades but to teach students that to function in the outside world, they will have to master ESWE (Edited Standard Written English) or their work will be dismissed before the reader has even dealt with the writer’s ideas.” (p. 58)

It is encouraging that Walvoord’s students do manage to meet the gateway standards. It underscores what research documents and most of us know first-hand. You can set standards that challenge students. If they understand the rationale behind the standards and their teachers stand by with support and encouragement, they will step up to the plate—often surprising us and themselves.

Reference

READING PROMPTS
FROM PAGE 4

“This is one way to facilitate a richer learning experience for students outside the classroom. The list of reading/writing prompts offered here is by no means exhaustive; in fact, they should only be used as [a] starting point to broaden the critical reading skills of other individual instructors’ undergraduate students.” (p. 132)

Reference
Communication Satisfaction Scale

Some research efforts produce tools that can be used by teachers to generate interesting and useful feedback—we’ve illustrated that in previous issues and have another example to share here. Communication education researchers have developed a communication satisfaction scale that measures how satisfied students are with the communication they have with their instructor.

Should instructors care whether or not students find their exchanges satisfying? They should, because as this research (and previous studies) document, those levels of satisfaction correlate positively and significantly with something these researchers call “affective learning.” Affective learning involves student feelings and emotions toward the subject matter and the teacher.

When those feelings are positive, they impact levels of motivation and cognitive learning in direct and measurable ways. What’s being explored here empirically makes a lot of intuitive sense as well. Most of us have experienced first-hand the “good vibes” generated when students in a class are reacting positively.

How are positive feelings about a course and instructor generated? Communication plays a central role. It matters what the instructor says in front of the whole class and in individual interactions—such was when students request information, ask about course content, exchange greetings, or ask a personal.

As in other research reports, the instrument developed and used in these studies (three of them are reported in the article) is included in the article. It contains 24 items in its long version and eight in a shorter version.

Here are some sample items from the instrument:

• I usually feel positive about my conversations with my teacher.
• My teacher makes an effort to satisfy question I have.
• I feel comfortable talking with my teacher.
• I wish my teacher was better at communicating with me.
• My teacher genuinely listens to me when I talk.
• My teacher makes time for me when I want to talk to him/her.

It is interesting to speculate what students might have to say about their communication with you, but with this instrument, and others like it, you can anticipate student responses by completing the form at the same time students do. Comparing a self-assessment with student feedback is a great way to learn more about the impact of teaching efforts on students—in this case the impact of communication exchanges.

Because the instrument is specific and detailed, it enables identification of areas of strength and weakness. As important is whether or not you can trust your assessments. If what you believe about your communication with students is verified by their feedback, that enables teaching with greater confidence. If not, the feedback offers insights that can lead to more accurate assessments of student responses. This applies not just to student-teacher interactions but to whatever aspect of teaching or student learning you and your students are assessing.

Instruments like this one can be used in the learning process.

Although many of us worry that the shortened, abbreviated lingo rampant in texting may be slowly sucking the communicative life out of our students, the need to condense thoughts and language to fit into the limited confines of a text message may hold interesting educational applications. The limited length of texting forces students to condense their thoughts to focus on key issues. This type of forced focus can facilitate communication of summaries, points of confusion, questions, or key terms.

It is important to note that you don’t have to worry about students not having the necessary technology to participate in these technologically mediated classes. Research from the Ball State Institute for Mobile Media Research indicates that 99.7 percent of college students have a mobile communications device (the majority with “smart” technology). And with the popularity of unlimited data plans, texting has become more popular than talking for today’s digital natives.

In an era of technological abundance, embracing texting allows us to engage students using their preferred mode of communication. Moreover, the novelty of the act alone is sure to get students’ attention. We suggest you try it and then when you look out from the lectern and see only the tops of your students’ heads as their thumbs frantically fly over their miniature keyboards, you can smile, because you know that for the moment, they are fully engaged with the cognitive task at hand.
Enhancing Out-of-Class Communication: Students’ Top 10 Suggestions

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Out-of-class communication makes student-teacher relationships more personal and contributes to student learning. It is also the wellspring for continued academic exchange and mentoring. Unfortunately, electronic consultations via email have diminished the use of in-person office hours. Although students and faculty favor email contact because it’s so efficient, interpersonal exchanges still play an important role in the learning process—much research verifies this. As teachers we have a responsibility to encourage, indeed entice, our students to meet with us face-to-face.

In a previous issue of The Teaching Professor (March 2010), Kirin Dosanjh Zucker provided a number of helpful suggestions for “Keeping Office Hours ‘Real’ in the Facebook Age.” In a similar vein, we wanted to share more ideas culled from our current research project on students’ perspectives on out-of-class communication. We’ve done in-depth interviews with a diverse group of 33 students. The finding that has most impressed us was already known, but our data has provided an important reminder: in-class communication sets the stage for out-of-class communication. If you are knowledgeable, convey caring for students, and announce your availability to assist, then students are more likely to approach you outside of class. Conversely, if you appear unprofessional in the classroom, convey apathy or disdain for students, and do not encourage interpersonal contact, students are more likely to avoid you outside of class.

Following are 10 specific strategies that the students we interviewed identified as being particularly effective for encouraging out-of-class contact with professors.

1. Be there for office hours, keep scheduled appointments, and make time for students when they need additional help.
2. Arrive at class early and stay after class (even if it’s in the hallway) to accommodate easy contact. This is the time when students with questions are most likely to ask them.
3. Include an invitation in the syllabus to visit during office hours. Give students a “by appointment” option, since your set office hours may conflict with their class or work schedules.
4. Tell students on the first day of class and regularly thereafter that you are available for extra help during office hours or at a time convenient for them. Explain that you enjoy talking with students, particularly about the course, current research, and your discipline.
5. Use email to connect socially and academically. In addition to prompt, brief responses, include a friendly opening and closing. Send periodic emails to the class to offer assistance on projects as they progress through the semester.
6. Write your email and office hours on the board regularly, maybe even every class session at the beginning of the course. Say more times than you think necessary that you welcome questions, comments, and the chance to interact with students.
7. Work to learn students’ names—sooner rather than later. Recognize and greet students when you see them in the hallways or around campus. Smiles and waves are also appreciated.
8. Provide specific feedback on course projects, and allow opportunities for revisions prior to assigning a final grade on major projects. Offer tutorials during office hours and encourage small groups of students to attend.
9. Schedule midterm consultations with each student (maybe even make them mandatory) if not many students are taking advantage of your office hours. Use these meetings to review the students’ progress in the course, provide assistance as needed, and help with goal setting for the rest of the course.
10. Provide your home phone number or cell phone number in case students run into “emergencies.” Although students most likely will never call you, they appreciate this caring gesture and invitation to accessibility.

In sum, students do pay attention to those classroom behaviors that convey we care. If we vigilantly maintain our office hours and employ the strategies recommended by these students, then we can more actively engage students in academic discourse, facilitate a deeper understanding of our fields and their associated professions, and serve as better advisors and mentors. Given what positive interpersonal communication does for students and for us, it is certainly worth the effort.

SATISFACTION SCALE
FROM PAGE 6

by practitioners to gain individual feedback. Obviously they cannot be used to collect research data without permission of the researchers.

Reference:
An Assessment Technique Using Research Articles

In entry-level courses it’s often a struggle to get students to see that the content has larger significance and intriguing aspects. Textbooks don’t usually identify areas of inquiry where the questions have yet to be answered or the findings so far are controversial. And yet often, this is the content most likely to interest students. But can you expect beginning students to read original sources, like research studies? Could you expect them to answer test questions about those articles?

A biology professor reports on his experience using research articles and asking test questions about them in an undergraduate course for students majoring in life sciences. Students were assigned a research article to read. Sometimes the article was discussed during the lectures and sometimes it was the topic of a tutorial session. Either way the students had access to the articles before and during the assessment activity.

The students were then given test questions on these articles. The questions were set at three levels on the Bloom taxonomy. Questions at level one were straightforward, testing students’ scientific literacy and conceptual understanding. Questions at level two focused on students’ abilities to link prior knowledge or textbook content to material in the research article. At level three, the questions asked students to link the research with their current knowledge and applying it in a creative way. Three different research articles were assigned and the test on each counted 10 percent, for a total of 30 percent of the course grade.

An elaborate system used to evaluate student responses revealed that students had read, understood, and were able to write about the research articles. A majority of the students were even able to correctly answer level three type questions. “The results showed that the approach strongly motivated students to step out of their comfort zone (textbook) and to develop high-order cognitive skills, including correlation, application, and synthesis.” (p. 289)

The author notes that finding suitable articles was a “major challenge” in developing this approach (p. 284). But the criteria used help to explain the success of this assessment strategy. Articles had to meet four criteria. First the article had to be relevant. It had to link with the content being covered in the course. Second, it had to be interesting. It had to address some topic that would capture students’ curiosity. Third, the article needed to be comprehensible. Students had to be able to understand it, or at least most of it. And finally, it had to be heart stirring—the author’s way of saying it had to be work that would inspire students and set high expectations for their future work as scientists.

Reference:

Participation Money

Encouraging students to talk, getting a variety of different students speaking, improving the intellectual caliber of what they contribute, and then fairly assessing those contributions makes participation a challenging instructional strategy. The following approach addresses several of these participation problems.

Here’s how it works: instructors create participation money—bills in different denominations. The back side of each bill is blank. When a student makes a quality contribution, the instructor gives the student a piece of participation money. The student then writes his or her name, the date, and comments about their contribution on the back of the bill. The instructor collects the money at the end of each class period.

It’s a strategy that gives students immediate feedback and gives the instructor the opportunity to point out why a particular contribution merits participation money. That helps the individual student improve. It also helps the instructor keep track of students’ contributions.

The instructor who devised this approach assessed its effectiveness in 10 tutorial classes as compared with eight tutorials where it was not used. Each tutorial section contained between 15 and 32 students. Participation was solicited in response to five provocative questions that were provided before each session.

The research questions addressed were these: Did the participation money strategy affect the number and quality of students’ comments? Did the participation money strategy affect students’ perceptions of their experience in the course? And did the participation money strategy directly or indirectly influence educational outcomes?

Results showed that there was an overall increase in class participation and a more equitable distribution of comments in those classes where the strategy was employed. The quality of student contributions increased, and students reported that they better understood course material and appreciated the atmosphere in class more than did students in those sections where the strategy was not used. It’s an idea that sounds great, and the evidence offered in the article verifies its effectiveness.

Reference: