

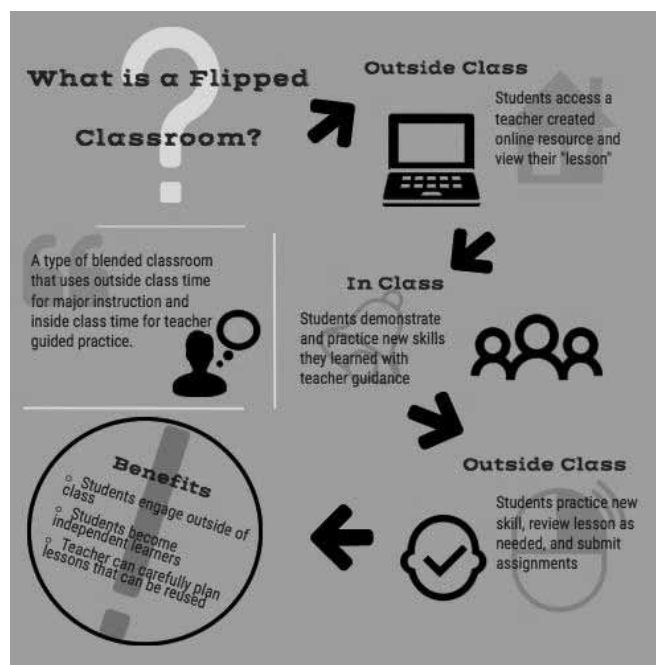
Using Technology and the “Flipped Classroom” Model to Improve Student Learning

Marianne White

Each year, we all have a growing list of administrator assigned tasks to accomplish—basics like taking attendance and entering grades weekly are to be expected, but then we add on the (still important) responsibility of keeping up with student needs in ARD meetings, and keeping daily documentation on some of our students behavior and emotional trends. We work on committees at our campuses and help plan events, chaperone dances, and communicate with parents. As teachers we are expected to spin many plates, and as band directors, we are expected to add in the juggling act of organizing trips, collecting money, counseling students, creating a beautiful musical experience, and figuring out how that tuba player can have preferential first row seating and not become part of the flute section...just to name a few things. We are busy and it seems like each year there is something added to the administrative side of our jobs.

A few years ago when my district announced that all teachers would have to turn in “student technology samples” at the end of the year, I was overwhelmed and completely confused about how anyone could expect me to complete this task in a band hall, especially on top of everything else that I was supposed to do. I whined a little, tried to think of loopholes (a metronome is a piece of technology and I can have a student operate it!), and then heard about the idea of a “flipped classroom” during our August teacher inservice.

The Flipped Classroom model fits really well with what we already do in the band hall! We already expect students to practice outside of class and then perform their skills for us inside of class. The art that we teach is better understood when students can hear examples of tone and see with their eyes how to put their instrument together, finger a new note, or stand at parade rest and attention. A modified flipped classroom model for the band hall can greatly enhance what we already do with a simple change in, not what we teach, but how we present it to students. This is great news—technology can be both meaningful in our teaching and appreciated by our administrators!



Why Online Instruction and Video Lessons?

A video lesson is an incredible opportunity for students to get a “front row seat” to whatever it is that you are teaching (every child gets preferential seating!). It is also the opportunity for you, as the teacher, to give a “perfect” lesson with few distractions—no one will need a nurse’s pass for their bloody nose, ask to go to the restroom, or be making goo-goo eyes at their crush across the room. If you record your lesson and decide that you want to word something differently, you can re-record! This exercise of creating video lessons is, for the teacher, also a built-in self-reflection; you really force yourself to think carefully about what you say, how you say it and truly think about how you are teaching.

Because you can strive for a perfect learning scenario for your students when you make a video lesson, I would recommend you reserve these lessons for large concepts—things that you want taught perfectly. This is not something for you or the students to be doing every day. Compare it to the Kodály “prepare, present, practice” curriculum model—just do the presenting part with a video lesson—

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preparation and practice happen in class time. Aside from the opportunity to teach a “perfect” lesson, the best thing about using video lessons is that students can access and re-watch their lessons as many times as they need to. The pause button is a beautiful thing—teach your students to use it! These lessons are also reusable year to year, so unless you want to change the way you word something, you only have to do the work one time.

Model for Success in a Band Setting

The model that I use to structure my classes may not be perfect or correct, but it is, at the very least, a good starting place. I strive to give my students these “perfect” lessons for any of our large concepts—putting together instruments, basic instrument maintenance, rhythmic vocabulary, music reading, and theory concepts are the pillars. They tend to have one video to watch each week, give or take, and I monitor whether or not they have done the assignment in a variety of ways. From putting funny cat videos on my website to having students complete a short quiz at the end of a video, I have many tricks to check for student learning and their completion of an assignment.

With the growing number of online applications that are available (many of them are free!), there is ample opportunity for streamlined instruction and assessment which, in turn, gives you more class time to rehearse and check in with student progress. Making use of technologies available can lead to great efficiency in the classroom and will help you mold your students into independent learners who search for answers themselves.

Marianne Condit White is the Director of Bands at Bernard Harris Middle School in San Antonio's NEISD. She received her Bachelors and Masters Degrees in Music Education from Texas Tech University in 2010 and 2012, respectively, and is an active “Music Technology Integration” clinician and consultant across Texas. Mrs. White began piloting a technology enhanced “flipped” band hall in 2013 and has never looked back. Her successes, failures, and tips are documented on her website: www.thatflippingbanddirector.com.

Getting Started

With another school year behind us, the summer can serve as a great time of reflection and planning. I urge you to consider how you could use meaningful technology in your band hall to enhance your teaching and make your class time more efficient. Creating an online resource (website) for your students is not nearly as daunting as it may seem. There are many resources available online to make your own website that are both free and user friendly!

Don't make the mistake of dismissing these opportunities for your students if you teach in a low socioeconomic area or if you are not a school with a 1:1 device ratio. If that is your situation, you just have to be a little more creative with when your students can watch your videos and do online assignments—have a few band hall devices that they can use or set up something with the school library or computer lab where there are “open band” hours or days. Think ahead and have a plan for those students who can't access something online at home—they will be grateful that you considered them!

Diving Deeper

I truly hope that these ideas get your brain scheming and am honored to have the opportunity to share some more specific thoughts and how-to's with you at this summer's TBA Convention/Clinic. We'll talk apps, web hosts, and my best tricks to engage students in online learning so that you can get your own online classroom rolling for the start of the 2016-2017 school year. If you just can't wait until July, I share all of my secrets on my website thatflippingbanddirector.com. It is full of tutorials, how-to's, and lists my favorite technologies to use when I'm creating content for my students.*

*** Marianne White will present “Flip” Your Band Hall and Enhance Your Teaching with Meaningful Technology! on Saturday, July 23 at 5:00 p.m. and Sunday, July 24 at 8:00 a.m. at the TBA Convention/Clinic this summer.**