



Doing More to Help Students Succeed

Cultivating independent thinkers through flipped learning

At A Glance

- April Gudenrath started flipping her courses, so her students could have better discussions in class.
- Using Camtasia Studio, April records lectures as well as personalized feedback on written assignments for students.
- Since she began flipping, April has seen huge improvements in the writing and critical thinking skills of her students.

Featured Product



April Gudenrath, English and philosophy teacher at Discovery Canyon High School in Colorado Springs, Colo., started flipping her lectures to make the most of her time spent in the classroom.

Flipping classes has allowed April to push her students to be creative and independent, as well as to improve higher-level comprehension. April records her lectures, assigning her students to watch them as homework. All note taking and memorization is done at home, so everyone comes to class on the same page.

April designs her classes with one goal in mind: to help her students succeed. “The one question that [we] always ask [ourselves] is what is the best use of my class time?” says April. “And the best use of my class time is not standing in front of the class delivering a lecture on Oedipus or Huck Finn or Twain’s style. They can get that anywhere; they can go research that; they can go Google that...that’s not the information I want to be delivering in the classroom.”

Instead of covering basic facts and background information during class, April works hard to create an environment that encourages in-depth discussions. “When you aren’t just lecturing or being the sage on the stage, you actually can have interactions in the classroom,” April says, which is where the real learning tends to come from. Since students aren’t expected to do all their critical thinking alone, they’re able to get a much deeper understanding of the course material.

Not Your Average PowerPoint Presentation

April’s students are huge proponents of her video lectures, which she creates using Camtasia Studio. They firmly believe reading through a deck of slides does not provide remotely the same experience as watching a screencast, hearing the intonation in their teacher’s voice, and fully understanding what she wants them to get out of a lecture.

“If you’re not engaged with the teacher, you’re not really going to engage yourself to go further and really find that connection between what [the teacher is] talking about and what they want you to know,” says senior Anthony Keys.

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Students in April's class engage in discussion.

The secret to April's success lies in the individual touches she puts into her digital content. Even when she can't spend one-on-one time with students to help them progress, she uses personalized screencasts to give feedback. Calling it "a two-way conversation they could have on their own time," April is able to connect with her students both in and outside of the classroom.

Quoted

Technology is a tool; it's not an end, and the tool should make your job easier. That's what I like about what April's doing in the flipped classroom, that she's using technology as a tool to make her job more effective."

—**Jim Bailey,**
Principal, Discovery Canyon
High School

This type of focused feedback is especially helpful. "Reading comments is one thing," comments senior Lakshmi Karamsetty, "but hearing it from the teacher—the way she says it—is another thing."

The administration is behind April as well. Jim Bailey, principal of Discovery Canyon High School, wants what's best for his students, and he's not afraid to try new things.

Jim asks his staff to look at students individually and say, "What does this kid need? How do I move this kid from here to here?" But how does a teacher go from wanting to help students improve to actually succeeding? She needs the right tools for the job. For April, those tools are Camtasia Studio and Jing.

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The Results Speak for Themselves

Flipping her class allowed April to schedule six full weeks at the end of a semester to focus on a written assignment for International Baccalaureate. The assignment had become somewhat of a nemesis for her students; it was something they dreaded all year.

"The thesis statements I got at the very beginning were just not their best work, and I couldn't understand why," recalls April. "And then if I compare those to the ones I got at the end of the six weeks, it's mind-blowing how different they are and how in-depth they went."

Students attributed their improvements to the specialized feedback they received in class and via screencasts. The feedback was so meaningful, in fact, that the next year April's previous students told her current class they would give them feedback on their own papers.

"Some teachers think it's scary because you're not the one in control; it's the kids leading," April comments, "but it doesn't bother me in the slightest to learn something new from those kids."

April recognizes it's equally important for her to learn from her class as it is for her students to learn from her. And with the help of her flipped lessons, students now have more time in class to delve deeper into course content helping them learn, as April says, that "English isn't just in the book in front of you, it's all around you."