

The Practical Professor

No. 8

Quick and easy tips, tools, and ideas for improving teaching and learning.

Why Aren't Students Reading?

Ask The Practical Professor #2

Dear Practical Professor,

My students aren't doing the reading, and this really frustrates me. What do you suggest?

B.S. – Well, I've learned if I thoroughly cover the reading in class (as in PowerPoint presentations), I teach my students that they don't need to do the reading.

J.F. – The opposite is also true. If I assign reading and then never *use* it in class in any consequential or accountable way, I communicate to students that reading for my class isn't immediately necessary.

B.S. – Yeh. We've got to **do something** with what they have studied – build upon it, critique it, help students **understand**, have students work with the information.

J.F. – But we can't just assume that students have really *read*. When you ask your students to "read," have you taught them *how to read successfully for your class*?

B.S. – When most of us say "read," we really mean "study." And most students don't know how to do that. Again, my students taught me that I need to teach them how to **study**, not simply read as if they were reading a fun novel.

J.F. – I'm a student in your Monday class and it's Sunday night. In addition to work and family demands on my time and energy, I have two other classes tomorrow in addition to yours. *Why should I read for your class?* Forget the test in two weeks or that next week builds upon this one (I don't care about that; I'm just trying to get through *tomorrow*). What is the immediate consequence if I don't read the assignment and/or what is the immediate reward if I do it?

B.S. – In management, we say that most people respond well to immediate rewards. **Immediate.** Not something 6 weeks in the future. Every week I give "open note quizzes" – easy to answer questions that students can use their notes to answer. A colleague gives a short paragraph where students explain the two key concepts in the reading. Another has students trade notes and critique each other. Yet another randomly asks 6 – 8 students to hand in their notes. The key thing is to give a grade **based upon doing the reading, not on understanding it** – the understanding part comes during class.

In the next *The Practical Professor*: Student Feedback Technique Series #3

© 2015 Joseph Finckel and Bill Searle

THE CENTER FOR TEACHING · ASNUNTUCK COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Also available!

Teaching

A series of practical and innovative teaching tips for college faculty

The Top 10...

- No. 1 – The All-Important First Day of Class
- No. 2 – Ways to Make Your Teaching Life Easier
- No. 3 – The Crucial Second and Third Classes
- No. 4 – Ways to Show Students that You Respect Them
- No. 5 – Promote Effective Student Study Skills
- No. 6 – Components of a Well-Planned Class
- No. 7 – Observe Your Teaching Tendencies
- No. 8 – Ways to Keep Your Students Learning
- No. 9 – Ways to Get Feedback on Teaching from Students
- No. 10 – Using Short Writing to Assess Learning
- No. 11 – Getting More (and Better) Student Questions
- No. 12 – Mixing Things up Mid-Semester
- No. 13 – Engaging Different Input Preferences
- No. 14 – Helping Students Stay the Journey
- No. 15 – Ways to End Your Course
- No. 16 – Resources for Learning and Teaching
- No. 17 – Create a Memorable AND Functional Syllabus
- No. 18 – Ways to Build Your Students' Self-Efficacy
- No. 19 – Practical Study Tips to Share with Your Students
- No. 20 – Laddering Thinking Skills
- No. 21 – Learning Based Ways to End Lessons
- No. 22 – Ways and Reasons to Be Vulnerable While Teaching
- No. 23 – Using Student Groups
- No. 24 – Components of a Complete Learning Experience
- No. 25 – Ways to Use Visuals for Learning
- No. 26 – Students' Locus of Control
- No. 27 – Help Students with Rigorous Writing Assignments
- No. 28 – Ways to Shake Up Your Teaching
- No. 29 – Teaching to Inspire
- No. 30 – Paths to Mindfulness

Contact your campus Teaching and Learning Consultant (TLC) or e-mail us at:

JFinckel@asnuntuck.edu or WSearle@asnuntuck.edu