

Textbook Reading Ideas/Strategies

From the AP Statistics listserv (May, 2011)

I don't recommend "participation points" or "reading points"...they tend to muddy the grade and detract from its purpose of reporting student achievement. Further, if they are reading simply to "get the points" they are kind of missing the point of doing the reading...which begs the question...

Have you made your reasons for assigning readings clear to them? Is the purpose to prepare them for the upcoming day's lecture/activity/lesson? Is it to review material that has been taught in class and further develop their understanding? Is it to help them identify concepts in which they are lacking and help them fill in gaps in understanding? If the students aren't clear as to what the purpose of doing the reading is, they will be less likely to do it...and assigning points does little to motivate those who would benefit most from doing the reading. It actually tends to be more of a motivator to those who could probably get by without ever cracking the text book open.

Some things I found that helped to encourage my cherubs to read include: 1) Walk the students through the first chapter at the beginning of the year so they understand all of the helpful tools in the book. Our department created "scavenger hunts" for the key elements of the text that we would use with the cherubs on the first day. 2) Discuss the purpose of the readings (whatever they may be) early and often. I'd do this every chapter, noting some of the cool examples or datasets they would be encountering. Kind of a sneak-preview 3) Don't base your lectures/activities solely on the book. If you simply paraphrase the text each day, why would they want to read it on their own? 4) Provide time in class, occasionally, for reading. I'd throw in a little Mozart, encourage the kids to find a comfortable spot, and give them 10 minutes or so to get a start on the reading. 5) Provide fill-in-the-blank reading guides for critical sections that you feel absolutely MUST be read.

I don't think there's any perfect solution to getting the kiddos to crack the text. I've found that these tended to help a bit, though!
Just my \$0.02,

Jason M. Molesky

I don't have any already made for BVD but I used to give my college students what we called "trivia quizzes". I felt it would be unfair to ask for mastery as soon as they read it so the quizzes were just designed to see if they HAD read it. So I might ask:

The main example in the reading for today concerned

the speed of cars on Triphammer Road
coffee prices from 1921 to 2007
etc.

Of course you don't want to get too predictable. Another type of question might concern what was the main topic covered, say, standard scores. Any new terminology introduced in the reading might be fair game just on the level of picking out words from a list, not defining them. These are not too hard to write and usually we discuss this as soon as the quizzes are

collected and there is immediate consensus about the right answer which discourages quibbles about that. Then we can use the quiz to lead into the day's classwork.

Robert W. Hayden

Forwarded message:

> From: Corey Andreasen <candreassen@sheboygan.k12.wi.us>

> I think the best approach is to have good discussions of the
> readings and s= how disappointment in anyone who can't contribute to
> the discussion because= they haven't read. I'm not a fan of using
> assessments to motivate behavior= .

I agree with Corey's sentiments but we all have to adapt to circumstances. Mostly I try to address statistical issues on this list and stay out of high school specific issues. I piped up on this one because I have taught statistics to thousands of students with less motivation and ability than most AP classes. Most of my students were there at gunpoint, taking the most dreaded course in their major. Starting off class with a discussion of the reading would have resulted in dead silence. Anyone who did speak up might be ostracized. The trivia quizzes worked for me, and I think there were a variety of reasons.

Because they were so easy nobody failed to try because they thought they could not do math.

Laggards saw their classmates racking up easy points and wanted a piece of the action.

The quizzes provided a way to take "attendance" which I normally do not like to do as I actually prefer those not prepared for class stay home;-) With the trivia quiz you only get credit for showing up prepared.

The record of trivia quizzes was very useful if students complained to the administration or their parents that the course was too hard. One third missed due to absence and another third to wrong answers looked a little suspicious. I suppose they might have had a case if they aced all the quizzes but bombed all the tests, but for some reason that never happened;-)

I described the quizzes as "extra credit" and arranged my grading policies so a student who never came to class except for exams but got As on the exams got an A in the course. Whenever a student asked for an "extra credit" assignment I asked how they were doing on the existing ones.

Many of my students were worried about passing the course. The trivia questions gave them a way to gain a few points while engaging in course content. I went to great lengths to pick readable textbooks -- something less formal and less mathematical than the average AP text. Many found it was not as bad as they feared once they tried reading it.

The quizzes shifted the balance so that students who missed the quizzes were the butt of teasing instead of students who did the reading being ostracized.

I would hope most AP classes do not need this artificial stimulation but toss this out for any that do.

Robert W. Hayden

I'm suggesting not worrying about points. I think when grading becomes a carrot for desired behavior, it interferes with learning and it destroys the ability of a grade to communicate about achievement.

It works better with some groups than others. My homework completion in AP stat is often poor because I don't give it a grade. But they learn a valuable lesson by the end of the year. And I find that when you do grade it, they generally do the least amount possible to get it done rather than use it as a learning tool.

Corey

Although, in theory, this is a college level course and students we should not have to hold students' hands or bribe them to do required reading, most high school students need to be taught how to be self-sufficient in learning from a textbook.

To that end, here is what I have done the past few years and it seems to work well.

- 1) Unit One--I give the students a VERY detailed reading guide with both questions about the content and instructions for how to read and learn from the textbook (and why that will be beneficial to them in the course). At the end of the unit, I collect the study guide for a grade. (just a completion grade)
- 2) The Unit Two reading guide has content questions and reminders about how to read and learn from the textbook. I grade this one, too.
- 3) For Unit Three, I provide them with reading questions and some odd-numbered book problems that require knowledge of the reading that they need to answer in preparation for a random verbal quiz (RVQ) the next day in class. Students can use their written work on their study guide, but not their books, during the RVQ's. I randomly select a student and ask them to answer one of the questions on the study guide. Students who correctly answer the question get a bonus point (if a student answers incorrectly, but obviously did the reading and just doesn't understand the concept, I do a little prompting). This actually has very little impact on their grade, but gives them incentive to read. (I have to make sure that students all get equal opportunities to answer questions, so my rule is that, once you have been chosen, you cannot be chosen again until everyone else has a chance, but one question per day is still completely random, to keep them all on their toes.)

Later study guides contain a suggested schedule for reading and questions they should be able to answer or important concepts they should take note of in each section, but I no longer collect the study guides or quiz them just over the reading. The guides are more or less detailed, depending on the difficulty of the material and the particular group of students I have that year. By that time, most students recognize the benefit of reading the book and keep reading it. I can always get the RVQ's going

again if I need to.

I definitely agree with several teachers who said to avoid just regurgitating the textbook content in class lectures because the students soon realize they don't need to read it. Discuss things they didn't understand, summarize the big ideas and then use class time for application and practice and hands-on concept building activities.

Jane Taylor
Covenant Christian HS

Many of my college students needed a lot of hand-holding! What I like about your strategy is that, instead of taking responsibility for the students, it teaches the students to take responsibility for themselves.

Robert W. Hayden

Lawrence Chiucarello <chiucarellol@newtown.k12.ct.us> writes:

In order to stimulate kids when writing, I offer the square-circle-triangle analogy. Write about the things you read that squared with you, that are circling (confusing/uncertain) in your head, and the three things you want to remember.

That's a GREAT strategy! I've also seen it done with a checkmark, question mark, exclamation point. It's a great means to get the students engaged in the reading so they are actually reading for meaning vs. reading for points. Having the students write a summary of what they've read is also a nice way to work on their communication skills.

After all, we are not only teaching them how to DO the statistics, but also how to COMMUNICATE it. Thanks for the great strategy suggestions!

The BVD book is structured for the kids to be able to read and make use of the step-by-step problems.

I agree. The "biggies" in the AP Stats texts are all pretty readable and engaging for students. However, BVD has the extra bonus of the little "easter eggs" of humor and sarcasm dropped in here and there! I love those!

Jason M. Molesky