TEACH ONE ANOTHER

“The challenge before us is to create even more powerful and effective learning experiences in which students have opportunities to take action . . . where prepared students, exercising faith, step out beyond the light they already possess, to speak, to contribute, and to teach one another . . . It is in that moment that the Spirit teaches.” President Kim B. Clark, Inaugural Response, Oct 11, 2005

PURPOSE
Teach One Another is a means by which students “step beyond the light they already possess” to contribute to and share responsibility for their learning in a collaborative setting. Teach One Another activities help students act for themselves, both individually and as a class by requiring them to ‘own’ a larger portion of the success or failure of their learning and the learning of their peers. Moreover, when students actively build their own knowledge structures, their ability to retain, apply, and synthesize their learning increases.

DESCRIPTION
Teach One Another activities allow students to participate, ask questions, listen, and take greater responsibility for learning. Core principles include:

- Students learn more when they teach
- Teaching allows students to act
- Action invites the Holy Ghost to teach

At BYU–Idaho, instructors are encouraged to minimize expert-novice modes of teaching where students simply listen to lecture. While lectures can be engaging in the moment, experience and research confirm that long-term student retention suffers with this approach.

Instructor Role
The Teach One Another process is not without risk. It will not work if students are unprepared or fail to participate. Moreover, because students are not experts, there is the risk that in the absence of good oversight and appropriate intervention, what is being taught is incorrect or misguided. These risks can be managed, however, through careful coordination of the process. Key instructor roles are:

- Specifying learning outcomes
- Designing and insuring appropriate preparation
- Carefully selecting and structuring problems and activities
- Monitoring progress generally and individually

Elder Scott has said, “Never, and I mean never, give a lecture where there is no student participation. A ‘talking head’ is the weakest form of classroom instruction…. Assure that there is abundant participation because that use of agency by a student authorizes the Holy Ghost to instruct” (“To Understand, Live Truth,” Church Education System satellite broadcast, February 6, 2005).

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Examples

Teach One Another activities can be used in many settings using a range of pedagogical approaches. BYU-Idaho examples include:

- A physics instructor assigns students to prepare by studying the principle of constant volume flow rate. In class, students are presented a practical problem that tests the key concept. Students must vote on an answer to the problem and are then asked to defend their position to a peer prior to a revote. The instructor samples the explanations through discussion, and intervenes with explanations when necessary.
- A professor teaching Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales assigns “publication groups” where students submit articles and publish a group journal. They are graded on the quality of their individual articles as well as the group journal.
- A computer science instructor assigns a pre-class quiz that tests basic knowledge. The quiz can be taken multiple times and then the in-class discussion is focused on missed questions. The instructor then presents an application case in class and the students are divided into groups to develop and present their solutions. The instructor monitors the responses and provides feedback, all before closing class with a discussion that synthesizes the key ideas.

Teach One Another encompasses many pedagogical techniques. One way to categorize these approaches is according to student and instructor roles.

- **Peer Interaction**. Targeted at introductory efforts and early assessment, often in pre-class activities.
  - Peer comparison
  - Study groups

- **Peer Response**. Guided by an instructor to deepen and integrate conceptual learning in class.
  - Concept tests
  - Socratic questioning

- **Peer Collaboration**. Driven by a project-based

Tips

- **Encourage participation.** Create a safe learning environment. Encourage all students to participate and by validate individual contributions.
- **Explain the purpose.** Explain to students the purpose of the Teach One Another applications.
- **Adapt your method.** Use multiple strategies to teach one another. For example, you might blend problem-based with discussion-based learning. Focus on a core set of applications.

Pitfalls

- **Replication.** Consider how an application will support your learning outcomes before replicating another instructor’s methods.
- **Lack of structure.** Effective Teach One Another experiences require significant preparation and structure. Students will often need aids of one sort or another as well as formal training to guide their participation in collaborative exercises. Failed collaborative exercises are almost always the result of inadequate structure in the process.

Key Articles


Other Resources

- Creating a Participatory Environment
- Role of Instructor

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