EDUonGo and Flipped Learning Enable Putnam High School Teacher to Empower Students

Transitioning to Flipped Learning for Improved Engagement, Comprehension

In Fall 2011, Tom Driscoll started his new position as a social studies teacher at Putnam High School in Putnam, Connecticut. As the term progressed, Driscoll began to notice that his new students were failing to fully comprehend concepts.

Fortunately, his evening pedagogy classes at Columbia University helped him address these concerns by exposing him to alternative teaching methods that leveraged technology to enhance student understanding and information retention. The flipped classroom method piqued his interest, and he decided to implement that model in his own classroom.

At its most basic level, flipped classroom has students receive the lecture at home—usually via prerecorded videos—and use class time to work on problem sets and other activities. Driscoll did just that, recording lectures and instructional videos and uploading them to viewing sites such as Vimeo and YouTube.

Students were able to view the videos at home, with class time dedicated to homework sets and small group activities to practice lessons taught in the videos.

Driscoll quickly observed that despite the good intentions, students either did not have access to the required technology at home or chose not to watch the lessons.

Many students continued to fall behind, while others were learning the content only on a superficial level. Recognizing the need for more than just putting lectures on videos, Driscoll researched additional teaching methods and implemented flipped learning with mastery learning, where students move through content at their own pace and must understand the content before moving on to the next topic. Driscoll provided the materials, tools and support, while the students set goals and managed their own time.
With the newfound empowerment and ownership of their learning, he saw a dramatic improvement in his students’ education. Specifically, 83 percent of students reported that their learning was more active and experiential, and 76 percent stated that they had more autonomy in how they demonstrated their learning of key skills and concepts.

The individualization and ability to work at their own pace has given students responsibility and ownership of their learning, which was not previously afforded in a traditional educational setting.

**Find a Time-Saving, Flexible Platform for Student Empowerment**

To implement the new learning model effectively, Tom needed to find a learning platform to encourage collaboration and communication in the classroom.

“After trying several learning platforms that failed to deliver the flexibility I wanted and needed for my students, I connected with the team at EDUonGo,” said Driscoll. “I stumbled upon the EDUonGo platform on a flipped learning Ning, and was interested in incorporating the platform in my classroom. Despite being in the beta testing phase, the platform offered an intuitive, simple and personalized interface. It delivered the necessary components to allow me to build the learning environment I wanted to enhance collaboration and communication inside and outside the classroom.”

As the EDUonGo learning platform matured, it provided more opportunities for Driscoll to customize his educational space. The new platform allowed him to spend more time working directly with students rather than planning lessons and assignments.

The incorporation of interactive videos, apps and embedded Google docs enhanced collaboration and increased students’ ownership of their learning. Driscoll also was able to incorporate more educational gaming in the classroom by using EDUonGo’s flexible HTML options to develop customized gaming features.
The Difference Lies with EDUonGo

Since the official implementation of EDUonGo for the 2012-2013 school year, Driscoll has seen the quality of his students’ work dramatically improve. Students have observed this change as well, and many voice that they would like to use EDUonGo in more of their classes. They enjoy the collaborative features and educational gaming aspects Driscoll has incorporated into the platform. Another plus the learning model has provided Driscoll is more time to work individually with his special needs students, who also benefit from using EDUonGo. Likewise, parents have noticed that their children seemed more engaged with the content they are learning in class.

Driscoll’s colleagues at Putnam High School have gained an interest in the flipped learning model and EDUonGo after recognizing the success Driscoll’s students are experiencing. Most notably, fellow Putnam High School educator Brian Germain solicited Driscoll’s assistance to implement EDUonGo and Flipped Mastery for his U.S. History Courses.

“It’s not just about a video at home and homework at school,” said Driscoll. “Incorporating Flipped Learning using EDUonGo enabled me to transition most of the direct instruction online so that I can spend more time with my students and facilitate higher-level thinking. I listen to what the students want and need, and I can provide it through our shared space, EDUonGo. Simply put, it’s a game changer.”
About Tom Driscoll

Tom Driscoll is a Social Studies Teacher and Technology Coach at Putnam High School in Putnam, CT. He has implemented flipped learning in his courses since 2011 and regularly presents and conducts professional development workshops regarding instructional technology. In 2012, Tom authored a study while completing his MA program at Columbia University called "Flipped Learning and Democratic Education."

He has also authored chapters for three books on instructional technology, including Flipping 2.0 and a contributing chapter to Jon Bergmann and Aaron Sams follow-up to Flip Your Classroom (expected Spring 2014).

About EDUonGo

EDUonGo enables everyone to share knowledge through an online learning environment. Schools, institutions and individuals partner with EDUonGo to host online academies through its cloud-based platform. With more than 1,000 registered institutions EDUonGo is the fastest and most powerful way for anyone to launch an online course. To find out more about how EDUonGo can help your school adopt to Flipped Learning, please visit our website at: http://eduongo.com/k12