

Ready to Learn: How to Get Your Students to Come to Class Prepared

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Questions for Self-Assessment, & Do's and Don'ts

Questions for Self-Assessment

1. Did I get approval from my department chair and Dean to use the definitional grading system with class preparation assignments (CPAs)?
2. Have I carefully explained the definitional grading system and CPAs on the course syllabus and in class so that students understand it? Have I explained it multiple times during the semester?
3. Am I covering the CPA questions in class and placing some of them on tests to reinforce their importance and to reward students completing them.
4. Have I stopped lecturing for the majority of the class period?
5. Am I leveraging student preparation by using active learning strategies to engage the students in critical thinking and other forms of significant learning?
6. Am I holding firm that students must attend class to receive credit for a CPA?
7. Am I praising the students for coming to class prepared?
8. Are the students more engaged with the material now?
9. Is class time more fun for the student? Is it more fun for me?
10. Am I hearing from all students?

Do's and Don'ts

Don'ts:

1. Don't assume your students will be unprepared for class.
2. Don't adopt the definitional grading system with class preparation assignments without getting approval.

3. Don't assume students will fully understand the definitional grading system with class preparation assignments after explaining it in the first class.
4. When students come to class prepared, don't continue to lecture as if they were not prepared.
5. Don't make the class preparation assignment (CPA) questions too easy.
6. Don't make the CPA questions too hard.
7. Don't refer to the CPA questions as homework.
8. Don't answer CPA questions before class.
9. Don't ignore the CPAs in class.
10. Don't simply cover the CPA questions in class and then go home.
11. Don't spend too long grading the CPAs.
12. Don't give in when a student wants credit for a CPA but does not attend class.
13. Don't ignore the CPA questions when you write tests.
14. Don't answer all the CPA questions yourself or allow the most vocal students to do all the talking.
15. Don't hesitate to praise your students for coming to class prepared.
16. Don't be afraid to try new active learning strategies.

Do's:

1. Design your course to incentivize students to come prepared.
2. Get approval from your department chair or Dean to use the definitional grading system with class preparation assignments (CPAs).
3. Carefully explain the definitional grading system and CPAs on the course syllabus and in the first class. Also, explain it multiple times during the semester.
4. Take advantage of the students' preparation by using mini lectures and active learning strategies to engage students in class.
5. Write the CPA questions so that they require the students to read, not simply scan, the material.
6. Write the CPA questions so that students can provide an adequate answer based on the reading. Add depth of understanding during class.

7. Refer to CPAs as class preparation assignments that prepare students for class discussion, higher-order thinking, and other forms of significant learning.
8. Tell students to give a good faith effort in answering each question and that any confusion about the answer will be cleared up in class.
9. Reinforce student preparation by covering the CPA questions in class. Ask students for their answers and expand when necessary.
10. Cover the CPA questions and then leverage student preparation by using active learning strategies in class that further engage students in higher-order thinking and other forms of significant learning.
11. Grade the CPAs pass/fail. Scan each to see if the student answered each question and gave a good faith answer. There is no need to make written comments, because you already covered the material in class while the students made changes to their answers.
12. Some students will test your boundaries. Some will want to hand in the CPA and skip class, but still receive credit for the CPA. Stand firm. The CPAs are class preparation assignments that prepare students for class.
13. Include some of the CPA questions on tests to reinforce to students the importance of coming to class prepared.
14. Have all students provide answers to CPA questions in class to ensure that they are prepared and to hear from all student voices.
15. Praise your students for preparing for class. Keep in mind that students seldom prepare for other classes. When they come to your class prepared to answer questions and to engage in higher-order thinking and other forms of significant learning, celebrate it and make them feel like a million dollars.
16. Try new active learning strategies to further engage students in higher-order thinking and significant learning.