POLLING IN THE CLASSROOM

You may often pause class to verbally ask students questions to evaluate their understanding of new concepts. Perhaps individual students raise their hands or shout out the answer. Polling is based on this familiar technique but allows you to incorporate the whole class rather than an individual student. Classroom polling enables you to ask a question and instantly receive responses from all students during class. This technique can bring active learning into your classroom and allow your students to engage with your content. By giving students time to engage, you will have the chance to adjust your teaching depending on if students need more time or are ready to move on. Polling is a great way to shift classroom learning from static to dynamic. Students will no longer be passive listeners but will become active participants who provide feedback and converse with peers and instructors.

There are countless benefits to polling in the classroom—for example, increasing student attention during lectures. You can punctuate your lectures with short periods of high student engagement, which can help students reengage their attention with you and the material. Polling also allows the opportunity to assess students' comprehension. Polling after the presentation of new material gauges students' initial understanding, and polling at the beginning of class on previous lectures can determine long-term comprehension of content. Various methods of polling will encourage lecture preparedness and increase retention and confidence.

Polling is especially valuable in large classes but can benefit various classroom types; large classes, small classes, lecture halls, and labs. Polling questions can be created and implemented in any discipline. Below are some general question examples that could apply to your classroom.

YOU HAVE OPTIONS WHEN IT COMES TO POLLING IN YOUR CLASSROOM:

ASK QUESTIONS AT THE START OF CLASS:

- Ask a recall question about something from the last lecture, homework, or assigned reading to get students back into the mindset focused on the course.
- Ask a question that leads into the upcoming lecture's topic
- Ask a question about a commonly held misconception that you will dispel over upcoming lectures

ASK QUESTIONS THROUGHOUT THE CLASS:

- Ask groups to indicate how much longer they need to complete an assignment
- Ask groups to discuss a problem and agree on one response supported by evidence
- Ask a question that connects the material just presented to previous topics
- Ask a question that will gauge if students understood what was just presented before moving on to new material
- Ask a predictive question to lead into the next discussion or demonstration
- Ask a question that has multiple 'correct' answers and have students justify their reasoning.

ASK QUESTIONS AT THE END OF CLASS:

- Ask students to identify the most confusing concept of the lecture.
- Ask students to rate their confidence in their understanding of the material presented in class
- Ask students to indicate where they are in the process of completing a long-term project.
- Ask an application question about the focus of the day's lecture.
- Ask a question for students to consider before the next class that will help them continue to think about the material between class meetings.

A TWIST ON POLLING

Polling can be used in combination with peer discussion. Pose a question to students and have them commit to an initial answer. Then allow them to discuss

their answers with peers, pose the question again, and see if students have changed their minds after discussing.

NEXT STEPS

A great next step would be to decide on a mode of facilitation for your questions. If you're new to polling, "low-tech" options may be an easy way to try it out. Examples of "low-tech" polling would be students giving a thumbs up or down or raising a number of fingers that reflect answer choices. You can also leverage technology and allow students to enter text responses or select a multiple-choice option. This link will take you to a list of various online teaching and learning tools used in several Clemson courses. Beyond these tools, you could check out Kahoot! (free for up to 40 students), DirectPoll, or Mentimeter (limited questions for free).

References:

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