
Stop-Go-Change: Midterm Evals

Objectives

To communicate to students that I have expertise in pedagogy, and thus that these instructional techniques are purposeful. To communicate to students that they have agency in this class, and that I respect their ideas enough to elicit and implement them. And, finally, to improve end-of-term evaluations.

Activities

The stop-go-change protocol (see below) is distributed at the beginning of class, or distributed online. Students are given 5-10 minutes to fill it out individually. While they are doing the activity, the instructor circulates to make note of themes (or if done online, the instructor collects responses). The instructor holds a 15-minute class discussion about the activity at the end of class or the next day:

- Reading some sample responses
- Explaining some of the common themes (which can be judiciously chosen to highlight the kinds of things you want to highlight)
- Emphasizing diversity of opinion (e.g., "some of you felt strongly that X, but many of you also explained that Y.") This can combat the "neighborhood effect" where students think that everyone feels the same as the 6 students near them.
- Taking a vote on some elements. If there are things that can be effectively done in different ways, you might take a vote among students to see if they want things done differently (e.g., do you want assignments more clustered, more

Usually, they are annoyed that I don't just tell them answers during the course of instruction. I ask, "why would I decide to teach like that?" They're smart people and we figure it out in discussion. They point out that the reason they're not doing well on exams is because they're not studying well; I praise them for being self-aware and remind them to study better (they laugh). They're also worried that in a discussion-based class, they don't know what notes to take. We talk about note-taking strategies and I promise to give a brief summary at the end of every class (done Socratically).

There are usually two or three other things that they are deeply split on (balance of simulations vs. experiments, how many hours the course is "supposed" to take, etc). In our discussion, I point out how different they are and we come to some kind of accord wherein the status quo doesn't change much. In other words, you can use your authority to make decisions in areas where they are split, which allows them to recognize the diversity in the class, feel that they have a voice, but you can still exercise your ability as instructor to make decisions.

Effectiveness

This has really helped my end-of-semester evals from being all over the place -- students are much less likely to say "everyone hated the labs" when they've had a frank discussion in which not everyone hated them.

Author

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Materials & Resources

Handout (below)

Classroom Context

Introductory science course;
upper-level science course.

Time Requirement

20-25 minutes

About this Project

This is one of a set of materials compiled for instructors to draw upon in order to frame non-traditional modes of classroom teaching for their students. Our hope is that these materials can help reduce any student resistance to such techniques.

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Other materials available online at www.colorado.edu/sei/fac-resources

This mid-term evaluation will give me feedback on how the class is going. Your answers are entirely anonymous, but I will use them in aggregate to start a class discussion.

STOP

What is something you don't like? It can be about the professor, the class format, the material, your fellow students, yourself, etc.

GO

What is something you like? It can be about the professor, the class format, the material, your fellow students, yourself, etc.

CHANGE

Tell me something about your own learning. What could you be doing differently to help you succeed in this class?

Sample student responses

Stop	Go	Change
I don't like how it takes a long time to find out if someone's statement is correct or not. We tend to elaborate more on each person's idea and sometimes get far from the answer. When doing this, it's hard to realize the truth behind each statement.	I love the review that we had today, it had the most insight and I feel like I got a lot of the facts that I need to prepare myself for the test.	Remind you at the end of the hour for a summary.
The class moves very slow on some topics that are easily understood, and when the hard concepts come up it seems like we speed through them and everybody gets a little lost.	I like the work with a group style of teaching. I like interacting with the people around me to see what they think, it helps me learn the material.	I need to take better notes during class, everything that is being written on the board and said I need to take a note of. That way I have something to study for when the test rolls around.
*there are no definite answers to problems *we discuss topics but are not told what is the correct belief	*the content of this class is very interesting	*more class periods that are structured like the class review days (where things are drawn on the board so we can take notes)
The expectations are not laid out very specifically	The class discussion builds on what we know/understand	I struggle with 'figuring it out on my own.' I could spend more time, and work with classmates to gain understanding from them.
The class format is frequently conversational, which I am okay with, but it can kind of trail off of a subject. A little bit more structure could be beneficial; I frequently leave class thinking, "What was the topic of the lecture that I just attended?" The freedom of choosing topics can sometimes be nice, but when it is chosen on the fly, we often lose track.	I like the fact that we are allowed to choose topics that interest us. The Piyd was a nice change from classes that dictate every detail.	Adding structure, maybe showing us your notes for the class everyday before lecture. I know you said you don't like to do that, but if you did we could maybe take notes based on your outline, and it would help us stay on track to the topics for the day, instead of getting distracted by other very interesting topics that simply aren't the task at hand.
I don't like how we cover such a wide range of information but we don't ever 'recap', and make sure we got all the important parts. I sometimes feel like I learned a lot, but not always the parts that matter...	I like how class is sometimes a discussion. I like an interactive class. I also like how everyone seems to be involved/interested in the class.	I am better with the interactive, hands on learning. Also if I have something to read later on the topic I retain more.
The class sometimes skips important flow steps. We jumped from a very classical model of an atom to a more contemporary model and I did not understand how the two related. I also do not always understand the connections between lectures, as this is not a 3 day a week class, a small review of the key concepts from last time would be helpful.	I really like the opportunity to ask questions, thank you for being so willing to discuss them, and, also, for putting some aside until later.	Some practice homework with the wave functions as would be on the test would be helpful. From the board to the test page was a challenge, and I would really appreciate the help of working on it some on my own, besides the HW from the sim.
Sometimes I feel like things are left a little bit ambiguous where I'm not sure what the "right" answer to a question actually is.	I enjoy the highly interactive classroom environment.	I could spend more time investigating class topics outside of class.