

# Flexible Learning



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## Editorial: Long Term Success through Successful Practice

Tips and tools to help engage students in successful practice.



With another year of college basketball coming to an end I'm reminded of the common quotes and cliches that surround sports.

Most quotes come down to a simple idea, success in games stems from successful preparation and practice. The harder we work when mistakes can be fixed the greater the chance we'll avoid those same mistakes.

In this issue of the Flexible Learning Newsletter we start by Getting Geeky with Tina Rettler-Pagel and Nancy Woodward who share wisc-online's game builder which has valuable templates to build games that help your students practice what they are learning.

In the feature article, leading teaching and learning consultant Sharon L. Bowman shares how to use "Rapid Learning Stations." And be sure to check out the preface by Active and Accelerated Teaching Fellow Kathy Jochman.

Finally, Trey Mireles, School of Online and Accelerated Learning Fellow, provides tips to "Start, Stop and Continue" and the School of Online and

Accelerated Learning shares valuable online resources.

Enjoy this most recent issue and if you would like to share in the future, please contact [Trey Mireles](#).

## The Accelerated Teaching Word to the Wise:



"It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge."

- Albert Einstein

To effectively awaken the joy in creative expression and knowledge the students needs the opportunity to explore knowledge and engage in creative expression. Providing your students with the opportunity to practice what has been presented using interesting and engaging means will help spark this interest.

What are you doing to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge? Share with [Trey Mireles](#)

## Getting Geeky with Tina and Nancy

### Wisc-Online's Game Builder

Join Tina Rettler-Pagel and Nancy Woodward each month as they highlight a Web 2.0 Tool you can use in your classroom!



Would you like to engage your students through interactive games that you've built to reflect your own content area? Check out Wisc-Online's new [GameBuilder](#)! With [GameBuilder](#), you can:

- Choose from templates for many different games. You enter your content in a game format of your choice: Baseball, Build Your Fortune, Matching, Tic-Tac-Toe, Jeopardy, Hangman, LearningLand, Quiz, Game Show, Bingo, TimeOut, and Spin to Win. Students can play from any computer, tablet, or smart phone.
- You decide how long the game should be by the number of questions you enter. Depending on the game you choose, you can enter questions that require answers that are multiple choice, true/false, matching, or essay.
- Students receive immediate feedback and can play the game as often as they wish.

Once you go to the [GameBuilder](#) site, you can click on any game for a description, a demo of the game or to start building your game. The games can be used to reinforce learning or some friendly competition among students. Your games can be private or public and there is a repository of games that others have built for you to peruse.

Best of all, [GameBuilder](#) is free to all WTCS faculty!

Need some help building your first game? Contact [Tina](#) or [Nancy](#) in CETL to explore the possibilities!

# Research

Join Psychology Instructor, Carola Pfortner, as she shares research on students and learning to better explain what sets Madison College apart.

## An Era of Research on the Process of Learning: Be Gumby not the Wizard of Oz-ucation

In What The Best College Teachers Do, Ken Bain (2004) includes research by one of the icons of Wellesley College - Blythe McVicker Clinchy. She suggests our student travel through 4 stages of learning:

1. A beginning student learns by “writing down the correct answers” given by the expert.
2. Discovering that experts disagree, students resolve all knowledge is basically opinion – if it feels right it is true.
3. Some students then resolve the issue by playing the game by the rules, giving the teacher what he or she wants in class. (We teachers like them a lot).
4. At the highest level students become aware of thinking and correct it as they go. One group “separate knowers,” are skeptical and willing to argue, (pains in the butt?) Yet others become “connected learners” at this stage, looking to self-correct by adopting others good ideas. This Clinchy found to be true particularly for women. Her work suggested we can lead our students to do both (Congleton, Cansfield, Norem, & Zimmerman, 2014).



The advice of the researchers to us instructors? Engage students at the stage that they are (sounds Vygotskian!) Keep in mind that students move around these 4 stages and need us instructors to match them according to their changing needs. Beginning students may need facts; opinion based learners need to learn to test them, and those seeking to please may need affirmation. Those who are connected learners thrive in a classroom community. Yet “separate learners,” while less comfortable to us as instructors, need our sympathy and understanding as they discover that rather than being the great all-knowing Wizard of Oz, the teacher is just the chubby person behind the curtain and not the one in control of truth. The answer is that we need to flexibly ENGAGE students in the PROCESS of learning so they can evolve to critical thinking.

### References:

- Congleton, A., Cansfield, A., Norem, J. & Zimmerman, C. (2014). Blythe McVicker Clinchy. In Memoriam. Wellesley Magazine. Retrieved from <http://magazine.wellesley.edu/fall-2014/blythe-mcvicker-clinchy>
- Bain, K. (2004) *What the Best College Teachers Do*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

## Preface: Practice

by Kathy Jochman, CETL Active and Accelerated Teaching Fellow

“Don’t practice until you get it right, practice until you can’t get it wrong.” - Author Unknown

A week ago, a group of students began an online class in Speech. Presenting a speech that **is** a speech...not merely reading from a prewritten paper...takes many skills. There is the *preparation phase* where students discover worthy topics, invite their audience members, and ready the recording equipment. Next comes the *presentation phase* of the learning cycle when students learn about effective ways to craft a message and go on to discover countless tips and pointers to define what makes a speaker’s presentation skills great. Before the final *performance stage* is reached, the majority of a student’s time is spent in *practice*.

I’ve always used “The Perfect Three” with speech students: Practice your speech out loud in front of a mirror until you perform it as close to perfect as possible three times. You should be willing to accept a grade on any of those three times. The fact that it takes *many practice attempts* to get to the Perfect Three is emphasized.

Welcome byproducts of achieving the Perfect Three include an enormous reduction in speaking jitters, an enhanced sense of accomplishment and pride derived from hard work, done well.

Of the four phases in the learning cycle (preparation, presentation, practice and performance) the majority of our time should be spent in the **practice phase**. Many of us remember the experience of taking classes that seemed to be endless lectures followed by tests. The information we received was often lost in a few months (or less) unless we were excellent students who created our own practice routines. Long-term memories, with all their glorious neural connections, are built by practice and repetition.

“Practice does not make perfect, only perfect practice makes perfect.” - Vince Lombardi

Not all forms of practice yield effective results. How can we build meaningful practice sessions into our classes? How do we orchestrate practice sessions that allow learners to build their knowledge through first hand experience and repetition?

One structure that can make a powerful contribution to your repertoire of practice opportunities goes by several names . . .Content Centers or **Rapid Learning Stations**.

Shared with the permission of author Sharon Bowman in her book **The Ten Minute Trainer**, you will find all the steps needed to create practice sessions that will engage your students and lead to the perfect practice Lombardi promotes. The times I use this structure in class are the times students rate the experience highest in terms of increased understanding, skill development and mastery of the material. Regardless of the subject I am teaching, the skills and content I hope reaches long-term memory for my students does not change. As a result, the work I put into crafting “perfect practice” is usable each time I teach the class again. The investment of time is worth the initial work that has an extended shelf life.

# Feature Article: Practice with Rapid Learning Stations

by: Sharon L. Bowman, MA

Professional Speaker and Corporate Trainer Director, The Lake Tahoe Trainers Group

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Imagine a training tool that keeps your learners motivated and actively involved while they review old information, learn new information, practice skills related to what they have learned, AND that does it all at the same time! This amazing tool, called Rapid Learning Stations, can do all that and more!

## What Is It?

Rapid Learning Stations is a training strategy that has been around for decades and that is highly adaptable to just about any topic and any size group.

Basically, you set up a number of “learning stations” around the training room – designated tables or spaces where small groups of learners will do specific learning tasks for a specific amount of time. The small groups rotate from station to station, doing a different topic-related task at each station. When all groups have participated in all station activities, you lead a debriefing session with the entire group to discuss what they learned from the Rapid Learning Stations. You can also answer questions and explore “next steps” during this processing time.

## What Does It Do?

The Rapid Learning Stations training tool enables your learners to:

**Review** segments of previously learned information in a variety of short, quick ways. The work I put into crafting “perfect practice” is usable each time I teach the class again. The investment of time is worth the initial work that has an extended shelf life.

**Teach** themselves some new, topic-related information.

**Practice** topic-related skills for a short period of time.

**Learn** from each other, self-correct and coach each other.

**Link** new learning to old learning, and draw on what they already know.

**Keep** both their minds and bodies awake and alert as they move around the room doing various learning activities.

**Participate** in the training in a unique and novel way, thereby increasing motivation and interest as well as learning and retention.



## Time, Materials, Set-Up

Before using Rapid Learning Stations, you will need to do the following preparation steps:

1. Decide what topic-related information you want learners to review, what new information you want them to learn, or what skills you want them to practice.
2. Decide how many learning stations you want to include. A general rule to follow is: There should be no less than 3-4 and no more than 6-8 people at each station at one time. So if you have 30 people in your training session, you can have as few as 4 stations or as many as 10 stations. Usually 4 - 6 stations will work with most groups. If you have ten learners at a station, you can always divide them into 2 smaller groups of 5 each before doing the station activity.
3. Decide what kind of activity will be at each station. Activities can include: games, puzzles, worksheets, discussion questions, reading assignments, skills practice in pairs or as a group, individual or group self-corrected tests, charts or diagrams to make, flashcards to review, direct instruction from you or an assistant, presentations or skits to prepare. If you include the last item, learners can perform their skits during the processing time after the station activities end.
4. Decide how long you think each activity will take, and then take the average of that time for the length of all station activities. In other words, the time for each station has to be the same, so you will have to adjust the station activities to fit the time allotted. Station activities work best when they are from 5 to 20 minutes in length. If you have to err, make them too short rather than too long. Whatever time you choose, make sure that the station activity pretty much fits that time span. Allow for about 30 seconds rotation time between stations.
5. Time for the entire Rapid Learning Stations process will vary depending upon the time allotted for the stations and for debriefing afterwards. For example, if you have four 10-minute stations, 30-seconds rotation time in between, and 15 minutes to discuss the station activities afterwards, allow about an hour for the entire process. If you have six 15-minute stations, you may want to run four of them for an hour, take a short 5 - 10 minute break, and then run the last two. With rotation time, the break, and whole-group processing at the end of the station activities, allow for about two hours of Rapid Learning Stations time.
6. Decide on a rotation signal to use. It may be high-energy music, a noisemaker, flashing the room lights, or simply saying "Time to rotate." Upbeat music is the most fun signal, as it lightens the mood and energizes the learners as they move around the room.
7. When setting up the training room, designate certain tables or breakout areas for the stations. Post each station activity set of instructions on a chart paper or handout located at or near the station. Make sure all necessary materials are at the station and that there are enough materials for all rotations. If using games, have all game materials ready to go. If learners need to bring writing or handout materials with them to a station, make sure they know this ahead of time.



8. Do one final check of each station to make sure instructions and materials are there and that there are enough materials for all groups to be able to do the station activity (example: enough art supplies, worksheets, blank chart paper, etc.)

## Activity Instructions

1. Explain to the training participants the purpose of the Rapid Learning Stations strategy. Tell them how groups will rotate (clockwise, counter-clockwise, randomly), the time allotted for each station, and what the rotation signal is. Let participants know what they need to take with them and what they do when they finish.
2. Check for understanding by asking learners yes/no questions about the procedure to make sure they know what they will be doing.
3. Have participants count off from one to the number of stations you have (example: they count off from 1 - 6 if you have six stations). All the ones go to Learning Station One, all the twos to Learning Station Two, etc.
4. Tell station groups to choose a facilitator for the entire process. Or they can choose a different facilitator for each station activity. Also let them know that they will be staying with their station group for the entire activity.
5. Begin the Rapid Learning Stations process and time each rotation (or assign someone to do this). While the activities are going on, walk around the room monitoring the station groups, answering questions, and offering assistance if necessary. Pay attention to the station time allotted -if it seems too short or too long for most of the groups, then change it to fit the needs of the majority.
6. When participants have rotated through all the learning stations, announce a short break, and then talk about the station activities with the whole group. Be sure to allow enough time for processing the entire learning experience. Have a list of discussion questions posted that station groups can talk about among themselves first and then discuss with the whole group. Discussion questions can include:

*Which activity challenged you the most?*

*Which activity did you learn the most from? Which was the most meaningful for you?*

*What were three important things you learned from the activities?*

*What did you learn about yourself? About others?*

*What are three take-aways for you from the Learning Stations?*

*What knowledge/skills will you use back at work because of these activities?*

*What is your action plan as a result of these activities?*

*What is one question you still have concerning any of the learning station material?*



## Activity Variations

1. Instead of doing all the Rapid Learning Stations in a row during a specific chunk of time, scatter them throughout your training day, having small groups go to different learning stations as breaks between lecture segments. For example, you lecture for about 10 - 20 minutes. Then each table group goes to a different learning station and does the activity there for about 5 minutes. Afterwards, groups return to their tables and you lecture again until the next Station Break.
2. Instead of rotating groups through the stations, you can rotate the activities from table group to table group. Simply make sure that everything needed to do each station activity is in a large manila envelope or small box, and pass the envelopes or boxes from table to table.
3. Have a “game table” where all the Rapid Learning Stations activities/games and instructions are displayed. During a Station Break, each table group can choose an activity to do. They return all game materials to the game table when done. Or you give them enough time to choose two or three activities/games to do/play.
4. Have small table groups make up the Rapid Learning Stations activities, complete with all necessary materials and instructions. Then do Activity Variations #2 or #3 with the “learner-created” activities/games.
5. Post a list of “Early-to-Finish” ideas so that any group that finishes before the station time is up can choose something to do for the extra few minutes.
6. Have learning station groups lead the processing afterwards, making up the discussion questions and facilitating the whole group discussion. You become the “guide-on-the-side” through it all.

## Final Thoughts

Rapid Learning Stations is an extremely versatile instructional strategy that lends itself to a number of practical uses. With it, your learners can review already-learned information, become aware of new information, practice skills, plan projects, study, quiz themselves or each other, and create their own performance-based presentations using what they have learned. The skies - and imagination - are the only limits with this useful, motivational, high-energy training tool!

“Rapid Learning Stations!” is an excerpt from Sharon Bowman’s newest book *The Ten-Minute Trainer! 129 Ways to Teach it Quick and Make It Stick*, to be published by JosseyBass/Pfeiffer in 2005, and printed with permission. Please cite the source when downloading this material. You can contact [www.Bowperson.com](http://www.Bowperson.com) for more information about *The Ten-Minute Trainer*.

Author and traveling teacher Sharon Bowman helps educators and business people “teach it quick and make it stick,” - fine-tuning their information-delivery skills and turning their passive listeners into active learners.

Over 40,000 copies of Sharon’s 6 popular teaching, training, and motivation books are now in print. Titles include: “*Preventing Death by Lecture*,” “*Presenting with Pizzazz*,” “*How To Give It So They Get It*,” and “*Shake, Rattle, and Roll*.”

Sharon is a member of the National Speakers Association and the director of The Lake Tahoe Trainers Group. She is also the “Trainer’s Coach,” helping individual teachers and trainers polish existing lessons and training programs, and creating new ones that reach all learners.



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## From the Facilitators: Start, Stop, Continue: Ways to Improve Your Teaching

Start, Stop, Continue is a classroom assessment technique that provides immediate, quick and quality feedback. In this article, it will be used to examine strategies to improve instruction via the environment, course design and teaching methods.

### *The Environment*



The learning environment, an unconscious first impression. Take the time to create a warm and welcoming environment that exemplifies your teaching philosophy.

**Start: Start changing the learning environment to meet your needs.**

The classroom environment whether in person or online is an important part of the classroom culture. Make sure the environment meets your needs.

Want to incorporate more group work in your face to face class? Set up the room in pods. Want to emphasize the importance of working through tasks in an online environment? Modularize the tasks requiring students to complete one before moving to the next.

Face to face or online, be organized, make it visually appealing and allow your passion to come through.

**Stop: Stop worrying about making changes.**

It's easy to follow the status quo.

Classrooms are set up a certain way and it takes time and effort to move them. But rather than let this limit you find ways to efficiently make changes:

1. Want to move desks but your short on time? Ask your students to help you make the changes.
2. Do you have diagrams, handouts or powerpoint slides you use often? Turn them into posters to put up on the wall.
3. Are there tools you're unsure about using but want to try out in the online environment? Use the data analytics tools in Blackboard to see how often they're used by students.

**Continue: Continue to use the entire classroom to your advantage.**

Every face to face classroom has 4 walls a ceiling and a floor. Are you using them all?

With advancements in technology, online classrooms are only limited by your imagination and a little effort.

And remember that learning can be even more powerful when it happens outside the classroom.

You have to know the destination before you can begin on your journey. As you design your course keep the end in mind as you take students where they are and get them to where they need to be.

### *Course Design*

**Start: Start differentiating between what’s “nice to know” and what students “need to know.”**

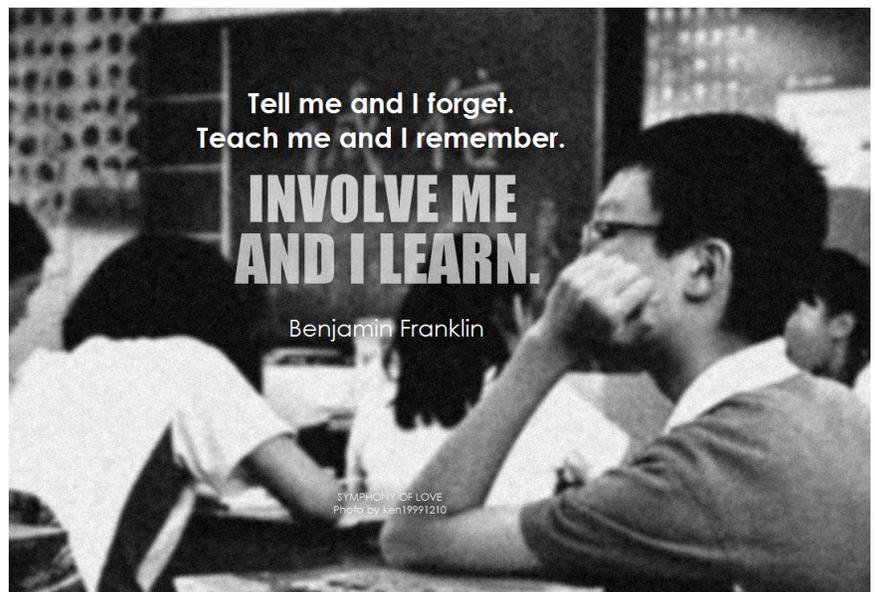
[Understanding by Design](#) (McTighe and Wiggins, 2005) encourages instructors to start by examining the goals and outcomes and deciding what is *nice* to know and what students *need* to know. Start focusing your instruction first on what students need to know to be successful in your course, in the rest of their program and in their career.

**Stop: Stop using the textbook as your outline.**

Textbooks provide an easy reference point. They can provide structure and organization. And at times, when examining what students *need* to know, textbooks work well with the outline of the course. However, stop using the textbook as a starting point when outlining your course. Focus on the outcomes and competencies and work from there.

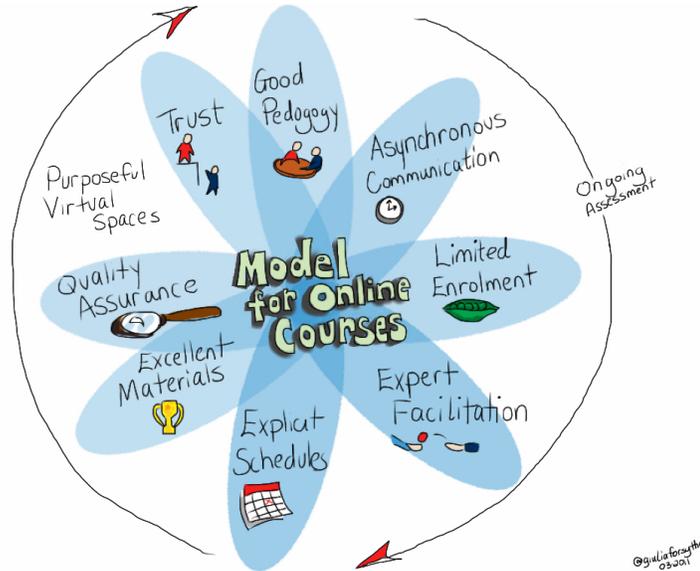
**Continue: Continue to reflect on what did and did not work and update your course design as needed.**

The class just ended. You’re feeling tired in a good way. It was a good class. But why? Take time to examine what worked well so you can replicate it. And of course, continue to reflect on what didn’t go so well so you can adapt and change.



## Teaching Methods

Teaching is both a science and an art. The art of knowing when and how to implement scientifically supported methods of instruction.



**Start: Start incorporating more active teaching and learning into your courses.**

Good instruction actively engages the learner. You know this. You use active learning. So why the challenge to “start” incorporating more active teaching and learning into your courses? Because we can all get better. As you’ve reflected on what’s working well and what can be improved on, consider where you can better actively engage students. Experiment with new methods and technologies and again reflect and adapt.

**Stop: Stop providing the students with the answers.**

You know what they *need* to know, so why not just tell them? Because actively engaging them in the learning process improves their retention. If the goal is for them to learn and retain the content then guide them rather than tell them.

But they asked a direct question about the content... Even when they ask a direct question, even a good question, challenge the students to find the answer themselves.

**Continue: Continue to challenge students while providing them with the support to succeed.**

Active learning is challenging. It challenges students to become engaged and it challenges you to trust the students. As you incorporate active teaching methods be sure to not only challenge but to provide support. Provide context, chunk content, provide resources and encourage the use of technology. Create a culture where learning is the primary goal.

## From the School of Online and Accelerated Learning:

Madison College now offers **free, unlimited online tutoring** for all students!

Please let your students know that online tutoring in math, science, world languages, writing, and more is now available. Students can access this completely free service, provided by Brainfuse, through their Blackboard account.

Madison College is piloting this entirely grant-funded program to determine our population's need for online tutoring. Getting the word out to students will help ensure its availability in future semesters!

### Quick Facts:

- Students must first authenticate through Blackboard to obtain their username and password. Please direct your students to the login instructions page: <http://libguides.madisoncollege.edu/onlinetutoring/login>
- All levels of math support are available 24/7.
- Tutoring support is available to Spanish speakers.
- Tutors are trained and certified by Brainfuse. All tutors hold at least a bachelor's degree and around 80% have masters.
- This product has an app and is also mobile friendly.
- Other services include test prep packages for TEAS, COMPASS and more, including professional certificate examinations.

You can choose to make the Brainfuse Online Tutoring tool option available for students in your Blackboard course, here's how: <http://libguides.madisoncollege.edu/onlinetutoring/instructors>

