



SI-42

Making Minutes Count

High-performance teachers and most other professionals think in terms of minutes. Success happens or doesn't happen at the minute level. As a college instructor, the class schedule probably describes your class as meeting two, three, four, etc. hours per week.

It's only natural then to think and plan in terms of hour blocks of time. An hour seems like a long time and a few minutes wasted here and there on instructional trivialities (taking role, passing out papers, off-topic discussions, entertaining complaints not related to teaching and learning) seems to be without consequence, but over the term the wasted time can be significant.

Do Minutes Make the Crucial Difference?

Yes, they do for two reasons:

1. The economic value of class time is significant. For example, if you have 30 students in a 16 week, three-hour per week class, that is 1,440 student hours devoted to your class. Assuming each student is giving up \$10 per hour of earnings that would mean your class is having a \$14,400 impact on your students.
2. The 80-20 rule applies and tells us that only 20% of what we do as instructors produces 80 percent of the learning. This means it's crucial to devote as many class minutes as possible to the 20% of the teaching activities that are producing the highest quality learning results for your students.

TFS e-Mentor Success Insights

If the results you are after is knowledge retention and application, then the highest quality learning time, hands down, is small group discussions, problem-solving exercises, and peer teaching activities. The time spent on lengthy lectures causes the lowest levels of retention. Yet pure lecture continues to be a favorite teaching mode of so many instructors.

The TFS Solutionary resource carries many examples of how to better use class minutes. Here are few to start with:

- “Frustrated Students? Tell Them $P=M+A+P+F$.” The TFS Solutionary, p. 181.
- “Think Systematically” The TFS Solutionary, p. 114 •
“Preparation—Warm Up for Success” The TFS Solutionary, p. 132

The crucial performance question is, how will you better allocate the precious instructional minutes that comprise your next class? If you don’t answer this question, who will?

*~John H, (Jack) Shrawder, Exec. Director
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