Jump-Start Your Online Classroom: Mastering Five Challenges in Five Days

Stein, David S.; Wanstreet, Constance E.
Stylus Publishing, Llc., 2017

Book Review

Tags: classroom management | online teaching | technology and teaching

Reviewed by: Marcia Owens
Date Reviewed: April 2, 2018

As a twenty-plus year veteran professor in a face-to-face classroom environment, I know to expect adjustments due to technological advances. These adjustments typically include learning to use new technologies and including them in your established and comfortable pedagogical practices. These adjustments are additions to your teaching norm. Now, with entire programs being converted to online interface, the norm shifts continually. With shifting norms in mind, I chose to review this book and actually apply its approach while converting one of my own classes to online delivery.

The brevity of *Jump-Start Your Online Classroom* should not be underestimated. Based on practical application of the content and concepts, its organization contains helpful hints on various aspects of successfully constructing a learner-centered, virtual classroom experience. The organization of the book is its greatest strength. Its five-day approach is based on five challenges: (1) Making the transition to online teaching, (2) Building online spaces for learning, (3) Preparing students for online learning, (4) Managing and facilitating the online classroom, and (5) Assessing learner outcomes.

One to three chapters are devoted to each of the five tasks and guide in confronting, conquering, and mastering each challenge. Embedded in the chapters are the almost clairvoyant voices of novice online instructors as well as online learners. Additionally, each chapter includes highlighted "Points to Remember" and ends with a section "For Reflection." This reflection portion, if done in depth, makes the five-consecutive-day plan less realistic. The reflections may include assignments such as developing a communication or time management plan, an assessment of technology tools, or a careful consideration of your own teaching

philosophy or pedagogical approach.

The fourth challenge, on classroom management, was especially helpful, as it contemplates interpersonal interaction and community building with people that may never meet. The section on teaching presence was especially helpful and thought-provoking. The authors use the analogy of the working parts of a car. For example, teaching presence is described as the "transmission component that allows us to set the pace, sequence, and activities that support and encourage students to work with materials and build their understanding of the content," and also as the "timing belt that helps us manage learners, the dialogue, and the conditions for learning" (78). I understood those analogous functions even though I could not pick out either of those parts on an actual car! Challenge four also looks at dealing with group work and disgruntled students. The perspective of the novice online instructor underscored the importance of modeling the behavior that is required of the students.

Although this book is marketed toward the novice online instructor, its approach, organization, and content make it a foundational tool that could have long-term value in troubleshooting and future course design.

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