

## BRING BACK THE DEAD

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No, this is not a primer on how to hold seances or literally revive a dying person, rather an attempt to revive participation, attendance, interest and achievement in students who typically call classes boring.

Lecturing has received its fair share of criticism as the poorest strategy for teaching most students. Yet teachers continue to use it as a primary mode of instruction. When one takes into consideration that many students are visual rather than aural learners, one can readily understand why this criticism is well founded. As a matter of fact, according to Madelyn Burly-Allen's book, *The Forgotten Skill*, people communicate forty (40) percent of the time by *listening*, thirty-five (35) percent through *talking*, sixteen (16) percent by *reading* and only nine (9) percent by *writing*. William Glasser states that people learn ten (10) percent of what they *read*, twenty (20) percent of what they *hear*, thirty (30) percent of what they *see*, fifty (50) percent of what they both *see and hear*, seventy (70) percent of what is *discussed* with others, eighty (80) percent of what they *experience* and ninety-five (95) percent of what they *teach* to some one else. Thus research and experience shows that if one combines the strategies or finds ways of making lectures as inviting as television or other forms of media, students will be more attentive and learn information as well.

For years, the author struggled to find ways to make the history and philosophy portion of her Introduction to Education class less boring. Students often peered back at the professor with glassy eyes, skipped class when this section of the course was being taught. In the first place, they could not understand "why we need to know about the history of education." Furthermore, they wondered "who needs to know what Socrates, Rousseau or Dewey contributed to the field of education?"

After a couple of years of seemingly lost lectures or disinterested students and poor test scores, the author decided on a different approach. Let students do the work! Use student presentations to provide some variety and such a strategy also makes the student an "expert" on the contributions of at least one educator/philosopher. Secondly, students would likely remember "something" about other educators/philosophers if their peers made an interesting presentation. Thus, the assignment evolved as follows:

1. Students are assigned one educator/philosopher each.
2. Students research the educator/philosopher.
3. Presentations (usually 10 minutes each) must be creative (not read from a copy from the encyclopedia, book, a biography or the Internet).
4. Presentations must be informative (leave out birth, death, number of children and other trivialities; include contributions to students understanding of education as it has evolved over the years).

How did it go? Slow at first, of course. Even though students were bored with the professor's lectures and demonstrations, they complained about having to do research and "get up before the class." However, once it became clear that the assignment remained, some got busy researching and coming up with ideas on how to present creatively. These were the ones who usually volunteered to present first. Others who had not been as industrious or didn't have a "creative bone in their bodies" were motivated and stimulated by the first presenters. A few "unchallenged" students simply read from the encyclopedia.

Was it successful? A resounding *yes!* The author has been more than pleased. Students have been very creative (and resourceful) over the years. They have made presentations in the form of interviews, eulogies, memorial services, talk shows, demonstrations, mini-skits, video tapes, games and the like. Each quarter, the type of presentation has grown. Thus the title, *Bring Back the Dead* seemed so appropriate. Students were required to and successfully made these people come alive through their presentations. Their classmates often participated and even when they did not, they appeared to be interested in what was going on. Some tried to "out do" others. There was a lot of competition to produce the better skit or demonstration.

Students were not only successful in making interesting and informative presentations, they seemed to do better on the test than the professor remembered students who listened to lectures in earlier years. To test this hypothesis, students were given a study sheet with a list of educators and their contributions to education. The author briefly reviewed the material with them, then administered a fifty item matching test. Needless to say, they did not do very well. The pretest mean was 23.36 with a raw score range of four to fifty-two. Twenty-five of the original fifty items were given for the posttest. The class mean was 69.44 with a raw score range of 4 to 100.

Some might be tempted to say familiarity with the test was the reason for the significant improvement. While that is certainly a possibility, one might change his mind when it is revealed that seven (7) students took the *posttest only* and their mean was similar (61.71) to the posttest means of those who had taken the pre and posttests.

It appears that this approach to teaching is an effective alternative to the lecture. It not only created interest and improved attendance, it improved achievement! It seems William Glasser was right on target! \*