

DITCH THAT TEXTBOOK!

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Practical and creative ways to teach with less reliance on the book

DITCH IT! HERE'S HOW!

Have you ever looked through your textbooks and thought, "Wow, this isn't how I would present this material at all!"?

Or maybe thought, "I can't use any of these activities" ... or "That's not a bit like how I teach"?

Then DITCH THAT TEXTBOOK! Or at least ditch it part of the time. Who knows the needs of your students and how they learn better than you do? This presentation and packet will give you ideas (hopefully some new ones) on how to ditch your textbook

and replace it with some fun and engaging activities and practices to get your students connected with your content.

Here are some general concepts to keep in mind while ditching your textbooks:

1. Don't be afraid of doing it wrong.

There are no secret formulas or magic words to make teaching less from the textbook work. Be brave, step out and give it a shot! You'll find out what

works best for you and what doesn't work.

2. Take it step by step.

Ditching the textbook can be taken

There are no secret formulas or magic words to make teaching less from the textbook work.

to many levels. You could start by cutting a book activity out once a week or once a day. If you're ready to stop teaching from your books altogether, chart your course before

setting sail. Figure out what you want to teach and in what order. Then design teaching

tools to help you get there. I make study guides with the grammar and vocabulary I'm teaching and reinforce them with my own in-class activities and practice exercises.

3. Personalize! Children like to be the stars of the show. Instead of using the pre-packaged questions in your textbooks, ask students about themselves. Get their opinions.

4. Be BEP. BEP stands for "bizarre, exaggerated and personalized." Take your examples, your texts, your stories to the extreme.

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SPEAKER

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"FLY" TO LIFE WITHOUT BOOKS

How planning curriculum is like air travel preparation

1 Pick a destination. Ditching the textbook is all about purpose.

What do you want to do with the powerful platform you've been given? The fundamental concept is the reverse curriculum planning that's the foundational element in college curriculum design programs. Start with the end in mind. Work your way backward.

2 Create a flight plan. Mission statements can be trite and forced, but I think they can serve an important purpose with teachers. Even if you don't have your mission statement etched in a plaque hanging above your desk in your classroom, it's good to know what you want to be.

3 Go over the pre-flight checklist. Landing gear. Wing flaps. Hydraulic systems. They all need to

work properly before a plane heads to the runway. As teachers, we need our own pre-flight checklists. They're the skills we want our students to master. The information. The processes. The experiences.

To ensure that a class becomes the learning experience we want it to be, we may need multiple checklists, such as:

- any applicable academic standards, policies or requirements,
- major curriculum themes,
- essential questions to be answered or addressed during instruction.

4 Finalize the details. The flight plan is similar to creating a unit plan and giving it some structure. It involves making a weekly list of activities and content for the entire year. I created a four-page plan for the year when I ditched my textbooks. Each page represented one

of the four grading periods of the year with a section for every week of the grading period. I listed:

- holidays, important school dates and any conflicts that might affect instruction;
- themes covered in the unit;
- activities, projects and discussions;
- academic standards and policies incorporated; and
- any assessments

5 Take off! When the flight plan is written and the pre-flight checklist is complete, it's time to figure out what to do with all those passengers – your students! With changes in technology and culture, today's students are very different in some ways than those of even a few years ago.

Digital devices – smartphones, tablets, laptops and others – and various tools on the Web have changed the mindset of this entire genera-



tion and much of the world. Thankfully, our digital world now has plenty of resources – many of them free – that create instructional opportunities that never could have existed before. Many students have been interacting digitally before they were able to walk. They're comfortable living in their online worlds, and we can take the instruction to them there.

6 Don't fly too fast! The amount of time you spend creating your textbook-less environment is important. In the end, it doesn't pay to rush. Take your time. When you create a new unit, really think about how you really want it to look.

At a conference, I heard a

speaker suggest that teachers create new multi-week units one year at a time. That didn't sound like enough time to me, so I jumped into the process with both feet. I revamped my curriculum for three levels in a matter of months. I made unit plans, created essential questions and even did some basic lesson planning.

I wish I hadn't gone so fast. Later, I looked over the planning I did in such a hurry. All of the lessons looked the same. There weren't multiple unique units. They were practically the same unit copied and pasted with some adjustments.

My advice: create new units thoughtfully and think of them individually.

GET STUDENTS DISCUSSING!

Discussion boards — Today's students are so comfortable communicating online. Why not let them do it in your classroom? Some schools have access to educational social networks like My Big Campus and Moodle. Others are available for free (Edmodo and Moodle sites

via www.rose-prism.org). Low

-tech discussion boards can be as simple as a physical bulletin board or note cards/papers displayed some other way. Post a question and have students give answers via comments. Start a story and have

students add parts to it until it's finished. Have students write a short passage and then comment on each others' writing with opinions, thoughts and their own personal experiences. Interaction is key here!

Rotation stations — Come up with questions that utilize the

vocabulary/grammar your students are learning (I find 20+ a good number). Type/write one question on a sheet of paper and place one paper per desk around the room.

Students go to a desk with a paper on it and answer the question (either by writing it onto the paper with their initials or writing all their an-

swers on their own sheets of paper). After enough time to answer, students move to the next desk in line to answer another question.

Rotating pictures

— The cousin to rotation stations.

Students find a

picture (online from Google Images, from magazines, draw, etc.) and print/affix to a sheet of paper. They pass their papers to the next student in line, who write a sentence about the picture. Sentences can be cooperative stories (one student starts it, next student adds to it) or

Today's students are so comfortable communicating online. Why not let them do it in your classroom?



Oct 15 8:36AM

Muchos años en el pasado, mi familia y yo fuimos en la vacación. Nosotros necesitamos las direcciones a Disney World porque no sabemos donde está. El hombre ayuda con las direcciones, pero no fui correcta. El carro necesitó la gasolina, pero mi familia no buscó la estación de gasolina. Hace quinientos millas que compró la gasolina. Las direcciones de hombre nos tomaron al medio del bosque. La gasolina se terminó en el carro. Nosotros duremos en el carro. En la mañana, mi padre caminó a la estación de gasolina y compró la gasolina. Nosotros manejamos a Disney World.

Yes! Comment Repost Report Abuse Delete



Oct 15 8:38AM

Hace nueve años que yo visite Disney World.

Yes! Report Abuse Delete



Oct 10 8:42AM

Un día, Isabel quiere ir a una fecha. Leonardo no quiere ir, pero el no quiere Isabel furiosa. Leonardo maneja lejos de Nepal a la casa de Isabel. Leonardo espera y espera, pero Isabel toma mucho tiempo se vestí. Después, Leonardo y Isabel van el cine en Nepal. La palomita de maíz se prende fuego y se quema Isabel. Leonardo tira los globos de agua a Isabel, pero no acata el fuego. Después la película, Leonardo y Isabel van la playa al lado de el lago. Leonardo no para a una señal de pare, y la policía ve. 98

Yes! Comment Repost Report Abuse Delete



Oct 09 8:50AM

Un día, Leonardo hace me muy furiosa y yo quiero salir. Yo me mudo a la ciudad de Nepal con mi familia porque es muy lejos de Leonardo. Yo tengo mucho dinero, entonces yo compro una casa grande y un centro de comercial y un estacionamiento. Yo compro tres y un tercero cuadras en Nepal. Mi hijos caminan dos cuadras y toma la derecha y caminan un cuadra ir al colegio. Mis hijos nunca caminan en la carretera, todas en la acera. Cuando mis hijos van al colegio primero, yo voy trabajar. Yo trabajo en el centro comercial de Sofia. Yo tengo que cruza la calle.

Yes! Comment Repost Report Abuse Delete

Students can write and interact using online discussion boards on sites such as Edmodo, My Big Campus and Moodle.

answers to specific teacher questions.

Rotating conversations

Match students up with a partner and provide a guided conversation, topic for discussion and/or a photo to describe. Students take turns

asking/answering questions or talking about the topic.

When they've had enough time, have half of the students rotate to another partner and start again. Use the same questions/topics for each new partner or change

them up a bit each time. This provides a ton of repetition of new content. It allows students to collaborate in an easy-to-set-up format. Plus, the quick switching keeps students from getting too bored.

GET STUDENTS CREATING!

Speaking homework — Use a Google Voice account or your own voicemail to have students leave a voice message speaking about a particular prompt for a specified amount of time. Either give students the prompt ahead of time or leave it as the outgoing message they hear. Student answers can be played in your Google Voice account or can be downloaded as audio files for playback later. Google Voice also supports sending and receiving of text messages for free and an audio transcription in English of all voice mails. I wrote a blog post about using Google Voice in class at:

<http://ditchthattextbook.wordpress.com/>

Blogs — Give your students some digital space to express themselves in the target language. Students post medium- to long-form writings in their blogs. Using educational social media sites like Edmodo and My Big Campus, students' classmates can comment on writings posted in

blogs. This is a real-life communicative activity that is very familiar for young digital natives. Blogs can be set up in a discussion board. Create a new discussion with each student's name. Students post their writings to the blog, and classmates can comment. If you don't have access to educational social media, students can write these blog posts in a dedicated notebook. Leave enough room at the end of the post (or on the next page) for classmates to write comments. Circulate notebooks to share.

Video and photo assignments — Many students carry powerful computers equipped with cameras in their pockets every day. Their cell phones, even when not in use in class, can be a valuable educational tool. Students can take videos or photos that capture the essence of content you're covering in class. A simple MMS (multi-media) text or e-mail to your school e-mail address allows them to sub-

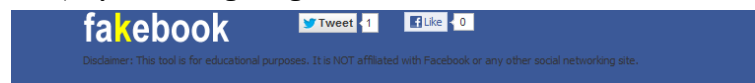
mit their work to you. Or, if they'd like, they can download it to their own computer at home and bring it to you on a USB drive. Skits, interviews, read alouds, explanations of problem solving, examples from the real world, etc. — the sky is the limit for using video and audio!

Fakebook and Twister —

These tools allow students to create a fake Facebook or Twitter page to illustrate content from a class. Fakebook comes with all the regular details from a Facebook page — profile picture, personal information, wall posts, other friends, photos, links, etc. Students can create Fakebooks of historical figures, characters in literature, etc. Or they can use Twister — a fake Twitter page generator — to create a "tweet" from a character of their choosing. See images to the right. Fakebook and Twister are available at www.classtools.net. **Wikis/pages** — Students can create their own web pages with photos and text using

educational social media sites or other sites (sites.google.com, weebly.com, etc. ... make sure they are allowed by your school's Internet security service). By submitting assign-

ments as web pages, classmates can check out each others' work. Wikis work the same way but are collaborative — several students have access to the same wiki.



Friends [add]



Brutus

Born: June 85 BC Job: Friend of Caesar but also a Conspirator I LOVE ROME!

[Add Post]



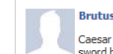
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GET STUDENTS LEARNING VOCAB!

Memory hooks — Also known as mnemonic devices, memory hooks help students make memorable connections between something new and something that's already familiar to them. I often spend valuable class time creating and helping students create memory hooks, and that time yields great results. It turns long lists of tough-to-remember vocabulary into recognizable words tied to memory connections we made in class. I often ask students, "What does it sound like, look like or make you think of?" When they create their own connections — or hear connections that their peers have created — they make that cognitive connection they need to remember new material.

Vocabulary grouping — This is a very basic but useful exercise. Long lists of vocabulary are made much more manageable when broken into smaller sections. Students can think-pair-share these groups. When students hear groups created by class-

mates, connections can be made that otherwise wouldn't be made.

Quizlet or traditional flash cards — The repetition from traditional flash cards is still as effective as it has been for generations. But now, the drill can be made a little less tedious. Websites like Quizlet allow teachers AND students to create their own vocabulary lists on the site. Students can practice their words in simple flash card form, take basic quizzes and even play games with their own content. Take it to the next level by subscribing to Quia, a website with tons of interactive games for teacher-created vocabulary lists.

White board drills, traditional AND digital — These classroom staples are great for any classroom. If you don't have lap whiteboards already and don't have the cash to get some, laminated copy

paper will work in a pinch (although they don't always erase completely clean!). However, to take white board drills to the next century, use a class chat room. Available in some educational social media, students can access the chat room and for a ques-

tion-and-answer session. Ask a question to the class and have them type answers into the chat window without hitting "enter" to send the message to the group. When you're ready for students to show their answers to the class, have them hit "enter"

at the same time. They'll see each other's answers on their own screens. If you have an LCD projector in your room, you can project their answers so you can point and make comments or speak generally about the class's body of work.

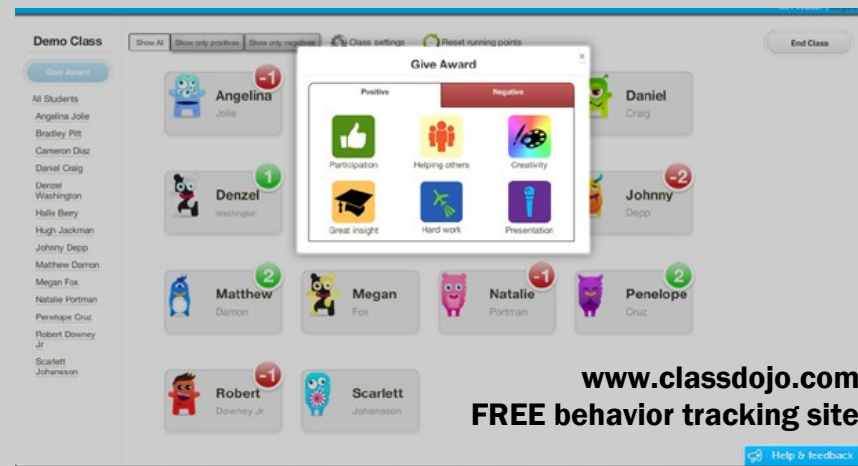


MANAGING BEHAVIOR

Class Dojo — This free website/app empowers you to easily track student behavior and quantify it. ClassDojo is a digital behavior tracking system that gives students points for positive behavior and subtracts points for negative behavior. Create a free account and then set up your classes. Create your own labels for

positive and negative behaviors or use the pre-filled labels. Use a smartphone, tablet or computer to enter data. A simple two-click (or two-tap) process adds or subtracts points. Students

and parents can access their "accounts" to see how their participation grade is. Behavior reports can be e-mailed to parents or invitation codes can be printed and sent home. I use this to track classroom participation in my Spanish classes — when students participate, I give them a point.



USING RESOURCES ON THE WEB



bubbl.us — This site allows users to create semantic maps/word webs in an interactive, flashy way. Create a main topic and branch off from there. Customize colors and positioning of bubbles. This can be used to organize long lists of vocabulary, plan out essays or presentations and more.



classtools.net — Turn your vocabulary or grammar into fun interactive games. Class-tools allows you to upload your own lists of content (in question/answer format). It then uses that content in several interactive online games where students try to answer questions to progress in their games.



storybird.com — Create stories in the target language with beautiful illustrations. Students can use illustrations

as a basis for target-language storytelling or can write their own stories and use illustrations to finish them. They're easily shared on a computer or projector. Plus, if students really love them, they can order a real bound book of their creations.

makebeliefscomix.com — This site allows students to create comic strips using the provided characters, speech bubbles and back-grounds. Students can create a series of strips for longer projects or a single one.



freerice.com — Free Rice is a great site to utilize for end-of-class filler or for supplementing/reinforcing the vocabulary in your curriculum. Students can answer questions in a

variety of subjects — including several languages. Questions get progressively more difficult. Free Rice sends rice to hungry people throughout the world for every correctly answered question. Free Rice will track students' progress long-term if they create an account.

voki.com — Voki allows teachers and students to type text and turn it into spoken text. Users can choose an avatar — an animated character — to speak the text for them. Voki can turn any basic writing assignment into an animated listening exercise.



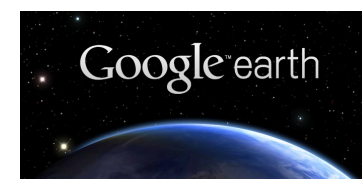
YouTube, TeacherTube and SchoolTube — Hopefully you've heard of YouTube and its education-focused cousins (Teacher Tube and School Tube). There's plenty of con-

tent to be had out there if you're willing to go fishing for a bit to find it. The list of options is long. There are some very good student video projects produced for class credit that have been uploaded. There are a ton of activities that can accompany these videos.



www.classbadges.com — Many students love games where they earn rewards for specific accomplishments. Education can be "gamified" as well, and ClassBadges helps teachers "gamify" their classrooms. Teachers can create badges for any kind of classroom accomplishment or behavior. They write a name for the badge and a description. They pick art for the badge. Then, when students earn the reward, the teacher can assign the student that

badge on the class page at ClassBadges. Give students extra incentive to achieve!



earth.google.com — Google Earth is a virtual field trip to anywhere on the globe. After downloading the Google Earth program onto your computer, it allows you to view aerial photography and maps of the entire earth, zoomable to the point where individual houses can be seen. 3D imagery gives students a true bird's-eye view of cities and other landmarks. Museums and other landmarks can be viewed through a virtual walking tour. Students can use Google Earth on computers or they can watch on an LCD projector. Plus, resources for educators, including lesson plans, tutorials, tips and more, are available at sites-content.google.com/google-earth-for-educators.