Lecturing Moves that Engage Students

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Your Next Lecture Can Be Even Better Than Your Last

Build on what you already do well, explore new possibilities, and leave with practical moves to strengthen student learning during lectures.

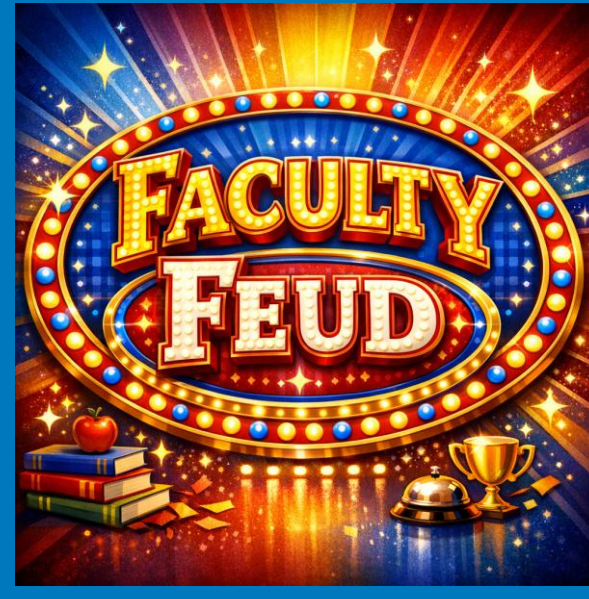
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You will be able to answer the following questions:

- How can we structure lectures to help students focus on what matters most?
- How can we spark curiosity and connection during lectures?
- How can we use pause and process to help students remember, reflect on, and apply what they're learning?

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What makes lectures a valuable teaching method?



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Drum Roll Please….. The Top 5 Answers were:

- Efficient way to explain complex material
- Model expert thinking
- Organizes information
- Access to shared foundational information
- Because 200 students can't all talk at once!

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Exploring the Lecture

The Reality

The lecture continues to be the most used teaching method

(Davidson & Katopodis, 2022)

Fortunately…

- Meta-analysis of half-century of research (328 studies): Direct instruction, when done well, works!(Stockard et al., 2018)
- Combining direct instruction with inquiry-based techniques often works better than either technique alone (Jong et al. 2023)

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High-Assistance Instruction is BEST for Novice Learners



Tetzlaff et al. (2025)

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Expertise Reversal Effect

- Tetzlaff et al. (2025);
- Castro-Alonso et al. (2021)



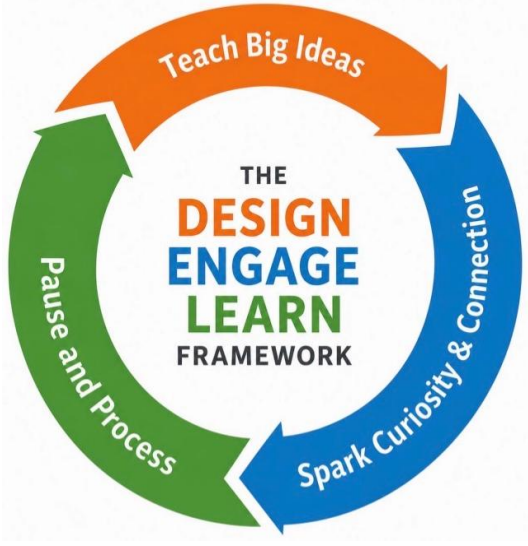
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It's the Moves Not the Method

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Six Moves for More Effective Lecturing

The Design • Engage • Learn Framework



DESIGN	Identify and Signal the Big Ideas Plan the Flow of the Lecture
ENGAGE	Spark Curiosity Spark Connection
LEARN	Prompt Retrieval Encourage Reflection and Application

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Design Moves

Teach the Big Ideas

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DESIGN MOVES

How can we structure lectures to help students focus on what matters most?



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Have you ever wondered why headings are key components of books but not always in lectures?



Students remember lectures best when instructors identify and signal to students the big ideas of each lecture. Breaking lectures into intentional chunks helps students see the big ideas more easily and prevents overload. It can be especially helpful to remind students of the learning goal of each segment as this keeps the purpose front and center.

Identify and Signal Big Ideas
Students remember lectures best when instructors identify and signal to students the big ideas of each lecture.

Break Lectures into Chunks

Breaking lectures into intentional chunks helps students see the big ideas more easily and prevents overload.

Remind About Learning Goals
It can be especially helpful to remind students of the learning goal of each segment as this keeps the purpose front and center.

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Design: What are the Moves?



Identify and Signal the Big Ideas

- Determine the big ideas
- Use questions to share the big ideas
- Signal importance before sharing the big ideas

Plan the Flow of the Lecture

- Segment lecture around the big ideas
- Use strong opening and closing activities
- Create a run of show

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How Do We Do the Moves?

Big Ideas in Question Format

Big Idea #1: Design Lectures Effectively → How can we structure lectures to help students focus on what matters most?

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How Do We Do the Moves?

Verbal Signal	• Say it's important!
Vocal Signal	• Change tone or volume of voice
Physical Signal	• Gesture
Visual Signal	• Bold or color text on slide



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Plan Your Lecture: Run of Show

5- 10 min	Opening Activity: Curiosity & Connection Spark + Introduce the Big Ideas		
15 min	Curiosity & Connection Spark	Teach Big Idea #1	Pause & Process
15 min	Curiosity & Connection Spark	Teach Big Idea #2	Pause & Process
15 min	Curiosity & Connection Spark	Teach Big Idea #3	Pause & Process
5- 10 min	Closing Activity: Pause & Process to Pull the Three Big Ideas Together		

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Evidence Behind the Moves

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Chunking and Communicating Big Ideas

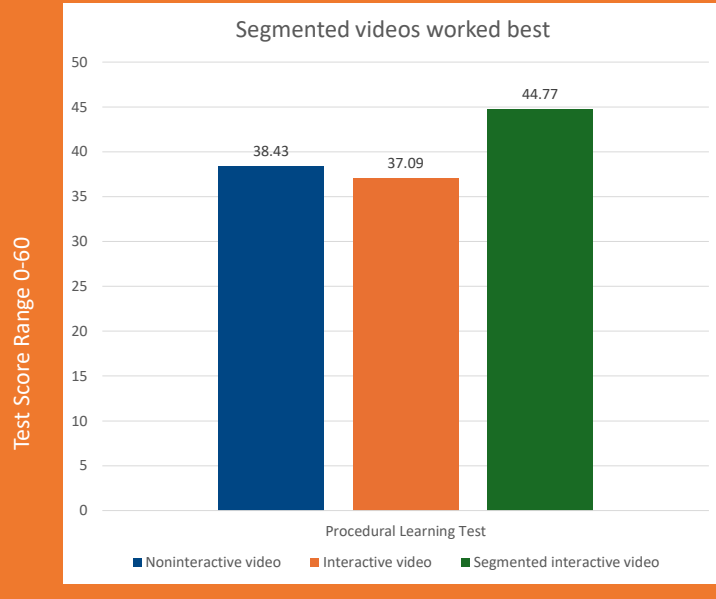
- Chunking content improves memory
  - (Thalmann et al., 2019)
- Sharing outcomes before passages led to highest performance, and question format led to higher scores than statements
  - (Sana et al., 2020)
- Strong one-minute closings improves learning
  - Dunleavey et al. (2022)
- Sharing lesson plans prior to class improved student preparedness and engagement
  - (Agrawal et al., 2025)

Teach the Big Ideas

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Segmenting Lectures Improves Learning

Biard et al. (2018)



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Design Moves: Pause and Process



Identify and Signal the Big Ideas

- What are the big ideas for your lecture?
- How can you use questions to share the big ideas?
- How can you signal importance before sharing the big ideas?

Plan the Flow of the Lecture

- How can I segment my lecture around the big ideas?
- What does your run of show look like?

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Engage Moves

Spark Curiosity and Connection

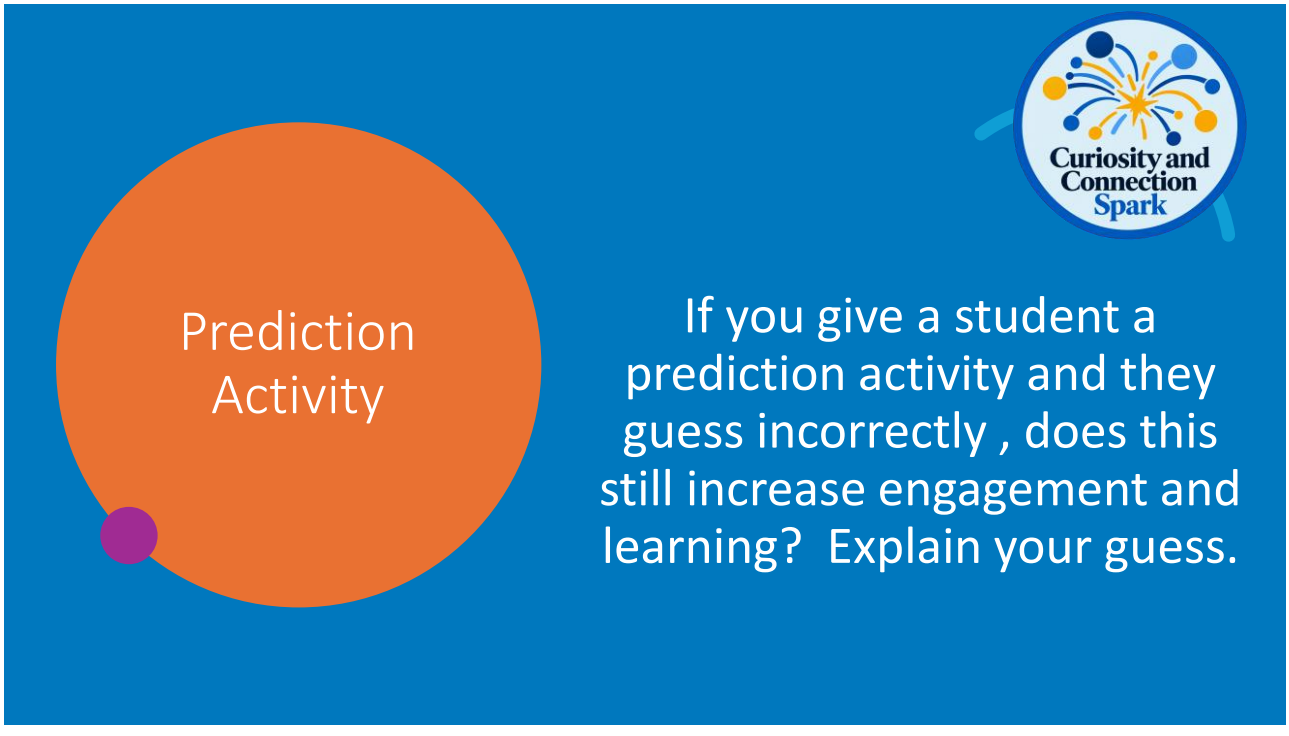
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ENGAGE MOVES

How can we spark curiosity and connection during lectures?

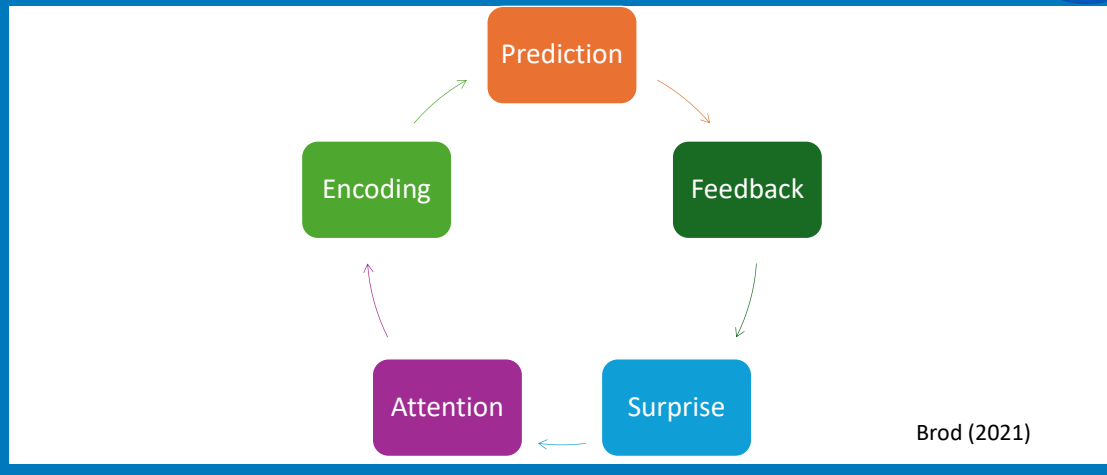


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Building Curiosity through Predictions



Brod (2021)

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Engage: What are the Moves?

Spark Curiosity

- Prediction Activities
- Questions

Spark Connection

- Build a sense of community
- Activate prior knowledge

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How Do We Do the Moves? Curiosity Sparks

Prediction

- Guess the Research Finding
- Academic Two Truths and a Lie

Question

- Make Me Wonder
- Why?

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How Do We Do the Moves? Connection Sparks

Sense of Community

- Well-being and Celebration Check-ins
- Think, Pair, Share or Turn and Talk

Activating Prior Knowledge

- Dusting off the Cobwebs
- KWL

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"In class, we engaged in a team activity. Four or five students were in each team, and the teams stayed together throughout the semester. The first team action was to re-take the quiz we all took prior to class, but this time, we could work together to answer the questions. In my opinion, this created healthy competition between the teams and increased how much we prepared because we were committed to supporting our team. The scores of team quizzes were tallied after each class, and the team with the most points received extra credit."

Team-Based Quizzes and Discussion
Katelyn Benes
Taylor University



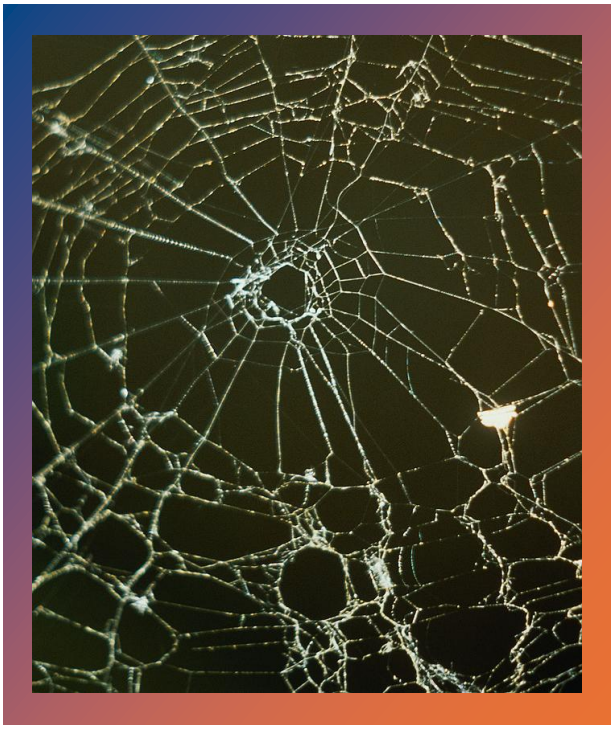
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"One of the strategies that Dr. Grimes uses in her teaching is emotional well-being checks. She understands that students have different needs and challenges, and she tries to create a supportive and flexible learning environment for all of us. She checks our mood at the beginning of each class and addresses any concerns we share. For example, she may ask us how we are feeling, what we are looking forward to, or what we are struggling with. She often shares tips and resources to help us deal with our challenges. She is empathetic and accommodating to students who have genuine reasons for not meeting the deadlines or attending classes. She does not penalize them for late submissions or absences but rather encourages them to communicate with her and seek help when needed."

Emotional Well-Being Checks
Patricia B. Ateboh-Briggs
Morgan State University



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Dusting Off the Cobwebs

- No Notes- What did you learn from our last class?
- Look at Notes- Fill in any information gaps
- Large Group Discussion

(Harrington & Zakrajsek, 2017)

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KWL

What do you know?

What do you want to know?

What did you learn?

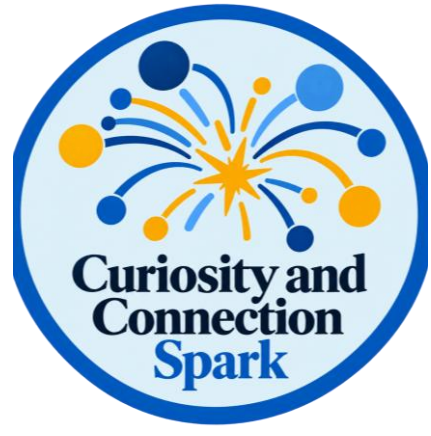
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Evidence Behind the Moves

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Prediction and Connection Activities Improve Engagement and Learning

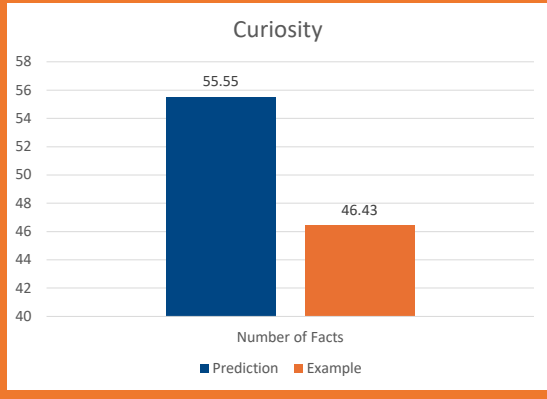
- Prediction increases curiosity and higher levels of curiosity was associated with increased learning
  - (Brod & Breitwieser, 2019)
- KWL Plus improved note-taking and listening
  - (Karagol, 2025)
- One-question check-ins associated with better performance
  - (Kettleman et al., 2024)
- High levels of engagement reported when Think, Pair, Share was used in class
  - (Chopra et al., 2025)



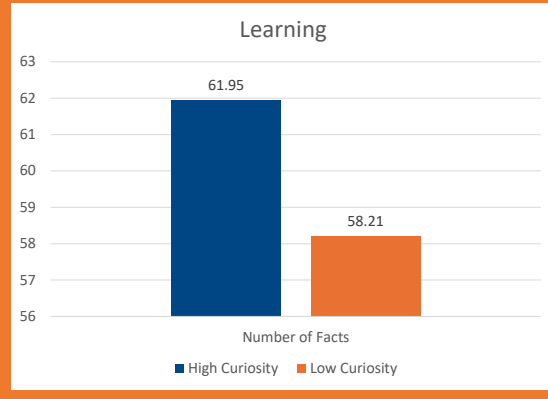
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Prediction Increases Curiosity and Learning

Increased Curiosity with Prediction



Increased Learning when Curiosity High

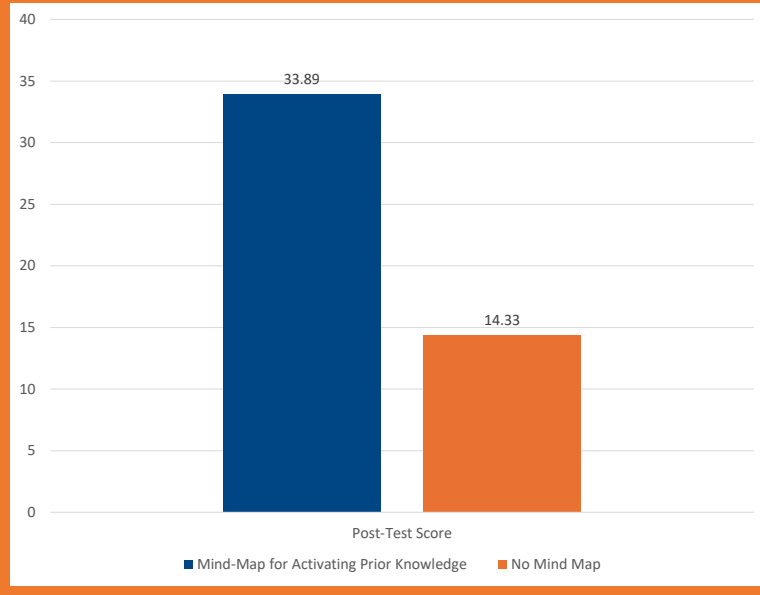


Brod & Breitwieser (2019)

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Activating Prior Knowledge

Subaie (2025)



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Engagement Moves





Spark Curiosity

- How can you use prediction to spark curiosity?
- How can you ask questions to foster curiosity?

Spark Connection

- How can you build a sense of community within a lecture?
- How can you help students make connections between lecture content and what they already know?

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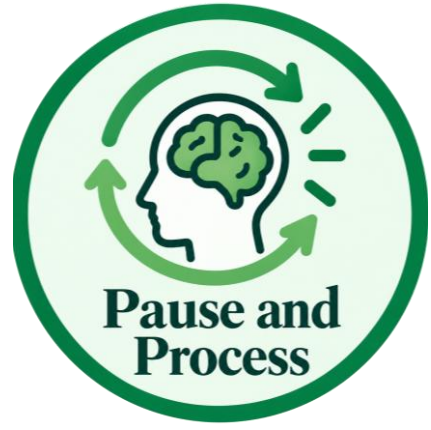
Learn Moves:

Pause and Process

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LEARN MOVES

How can we use pause and process to help students remember, reflect on, and apply what they're learning?



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Academic Two Truths and a Lie

Curiosity and Connection Spark

Writing summaries during a pause works better than reviewing notes.

Interactive quizzes during class improve learning.

Reflection works best when done independently.

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Learn: What are the Moves?

Practice Retrieval

- Quizzes
- Summaries

Reflect and Apply

- Application
- Metacognition

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How Do We Do the Moves? Pause and Process

Retrieval Practice

- Interactive Quiz
- One Minute Paper

Reflect and Apply

- Muddiest Point
- 5 Paper Fast Pass

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5 Paper Fast Pass

What is one way you can apply what we are learning today to your next lecture?



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Evidence Behind the Moves

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Pausing Improves Engagement and Learning

Pausing during lectures is associated with increased learning

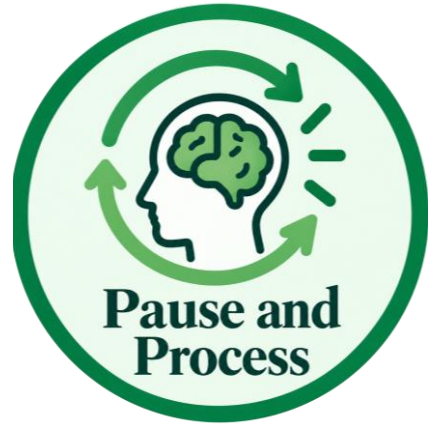
- (Chaudhry, 2024; Ruhl et al., 1987)

Quizzes improve engagement and learning

- (Bawa, 2019; Owen & Licorish, 2020)

Metacognitive tasks like Muddiest Point improve self-regulation and improve performance

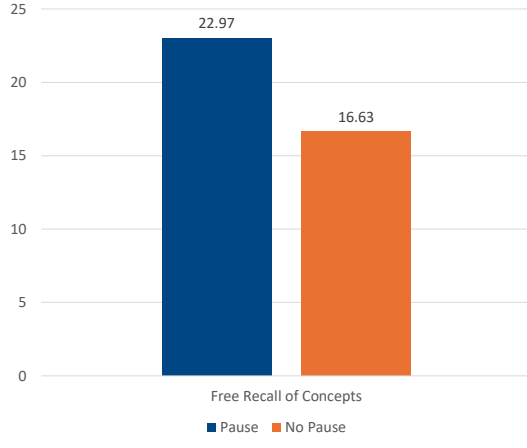
- (Clark et al., 2023; Reynolds, 2026)

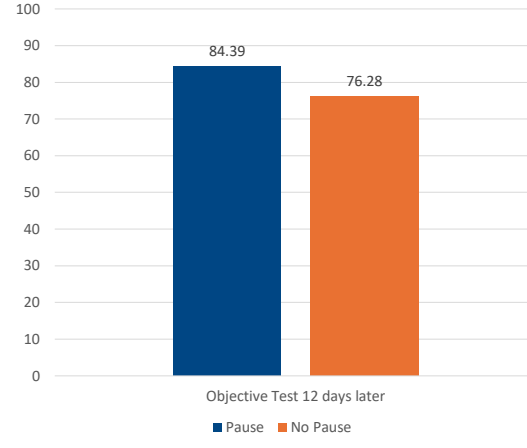


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The Power of Pausing

Three 2-minute Pauses to Review Concepts and Share Notes



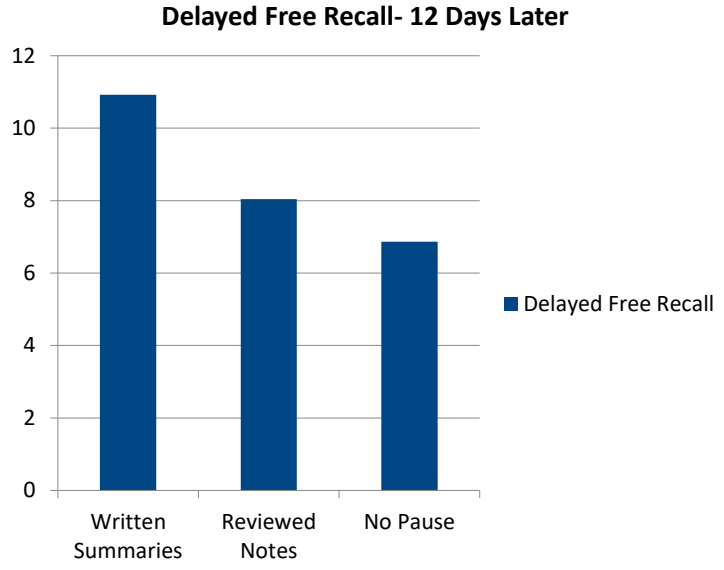


Ruhl et al. (1987)

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The Power of Writing Summaries During Class

- 79 Students randomly assigned
- 21-minute video lecture with two 4-minute pauses



Davis & Hult (1997)

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Pausing and Revising Notes

Luo et al. (2016)

Revising notes DURING lecture vs. after lecture

Revising WITH A PARTNER vs. revising alone

- Concepts in Notes
- Higher Test Scores

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Benefits of Pausing

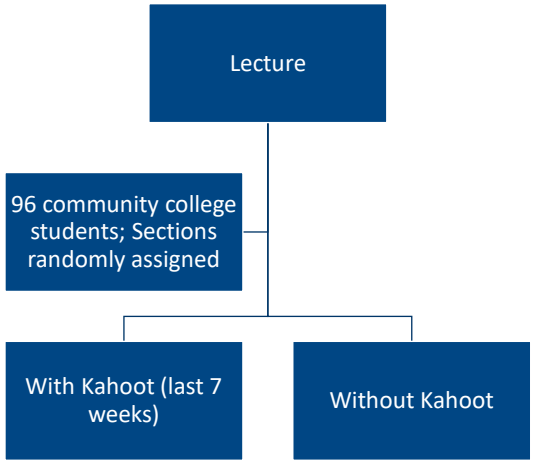
Chaudhry et al. (2024)

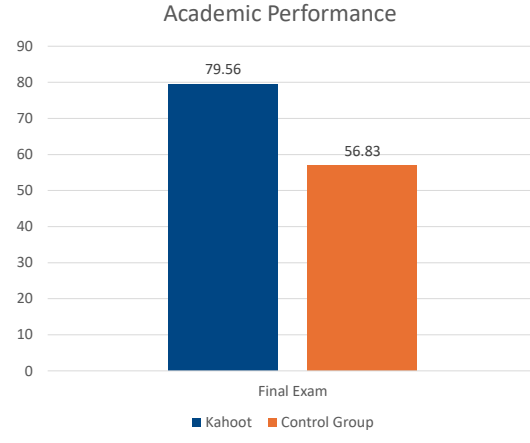
Variable	Pause	No Pause
Improvement in Multiple Choice Items	**66.6%**	**40%**
Perceived Achievement of Learning Outcomes	**73.3%**	**43.3%**
Clarity of Topic	**86.7%**	**43.3%**
Maintained Attention Until End of Lecture	**80%**	**26.7%**

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Kahoot Improves Learning

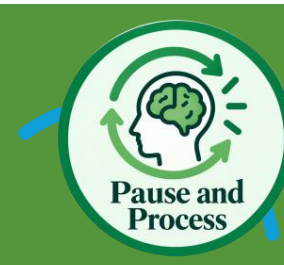
Bawa (2019)





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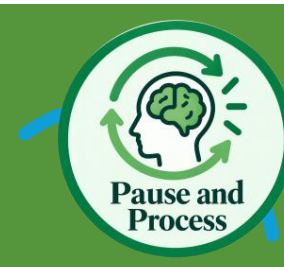
Quick Quiz: True or False?



Written summaries improved retention of information and exam performance.

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Quick Quiz: True or False?



Revising notes during class with a partner improved academic performance.

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Learning Moves





Practice Retrieval

- How can you use quizzes during lectures to improve learning?
- What summary tasks can you incorporate into your lectures?

Reflect and Apply

- How can you use pauses to help students process and apply what they are learning?
- How can you encourage students to engage in metacognition during lectures?

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A Trip Down Memory Lane

How Many Moves Can You Recall?

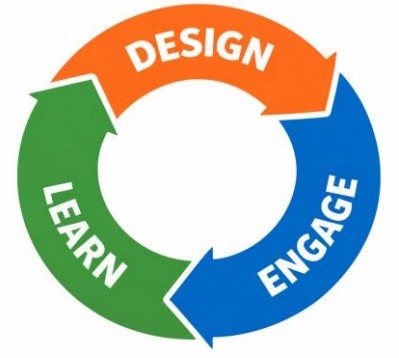


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Design, Engage, and Learn Lecturing Moves

DESIGN	ENGAGE	LEARN
01 Identify and Signal the Big Ideas	03 Spark Curiosity	05 Prompt Retrieval
02 Plan the Flow of the Lecture	04 Spark Connection	06 Encourage Reflection and Application

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DESIGN MOVES

Teach big ideas

1. Identify and Signal the Big Ideas

- Determine big ideas
- Use questions to share the big ideas
- Signal importance before sharing the big ideas

2. Plan the Flow of the Lecture

- Segment your lecture around the big ideas
- Use effective openings and closings
- Create a run of show

ENGAGE MOVES

Spark curiosity and connection

3. Spark Curiosity

- Use predictions
- Ask intriguing questions
- Make Me Wonder

4. Spark Connection

- Check-ins
- Think Pair Share
- Dusting Off the Cobwebs
- KWL

LEARN MOVES

Pause and process

5. Practice Retrieval

- Interactive quizzes (e.g., Kahoot)
- One-minute summary

6. Reflect and Apply

- Muddiest Point
- 5 Paper Fast Pass

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Mission Accomplished? Achievements and Actions

How can we structure lectures to help students focus on what matters most?

How can we spark curiosity and connection during lectures?

How can we use pause and process to help students remember, reflect on, and apply what they're learning?

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Which Design, Engage, and Learn move will you try in your next lecture?

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