

Positive Reinforcement: Keeping Students on Track within the Flipped Classroom.

Thomas Goetz
Hokusei Gakuen University
Sapporo, Japan

Review

While a lot of formal and informal discussion about improving classroom performance among students is often focused on teacher feedback, the latent assumption is that with feedback of any kind, student uptake will follow (Fu & Nassaji, 2016). This is found in the classical teacher fronted classroom as well as in totally online learning environments (Okazaki, Hashimoto, Fukuda, Nitta, & Kido, 2012). ER programs as well as flipped classrooms are no exception (Halder & Akhter, 2012). Should students be sorted by a placement test or not, there still will be enough variation for the teacher to consider, if not worry, about being more inclusive while conducting class (Carlson, 2015). Constructing a milieu for self-reflection, self-evaluation and learner perceived paths (Allen, Hadjistassou, & Richardson, 2016) for improvement need to be considerations when developing positive reinforcement schedules aimed at keeping students on track within the flipped classroom.

When equipped with a comprehensive e-learning adjunct for required English as a Foreign Language courses, the expectation is for the students to complete their online work in a timely manner by course end. Here is an ideal class had total compliance from its 20 students. All online assignments were done.



This happens when teachers monitor student progress regularly with a "Hands On" Approach.

Some teachers may initially take a "Hands Off" attitude for monitoring student progress. Results are disappointing when considering how much work was not done by semester's end.



Most students did not come close to completing their work. And, the teachers allowed for it.

The Question is Why.

Students may calculate their grades without the e-learning component and conclude that non-participation is a workable option.

The teacher may feel little ownership over the e-learning component and regard it as insignificant.

With either or both of these two attitudes, apathy quickly sets in that can undermine curricular goals.

Goetz 2018 shows what a favorable difference Readiness Quizzes make for both students and teachers (Goetz, 2018).

From Here to There...

The process employed that turned Moodle laggards into students who were up to date with their out of class Moodle assignments is the focus for reflection in light of current practice.

Students, all non-English majors fulfilling an academic requirement, were told at the beginning of the semester that access to midterm tests was contingent upon having completed all required Preparation and Review quizzes, carefully chained together in a gateway fashion.

Normally, these tasks were to be done outside of class in accordance with a flipped learning approach.

This material was announced on the first day of class and followed up with a Readiness Quiz. The quiz itself served as a gateway to all other quizzes. By achieving a 100% on the Readiness Quiz, all other quizzes would open.

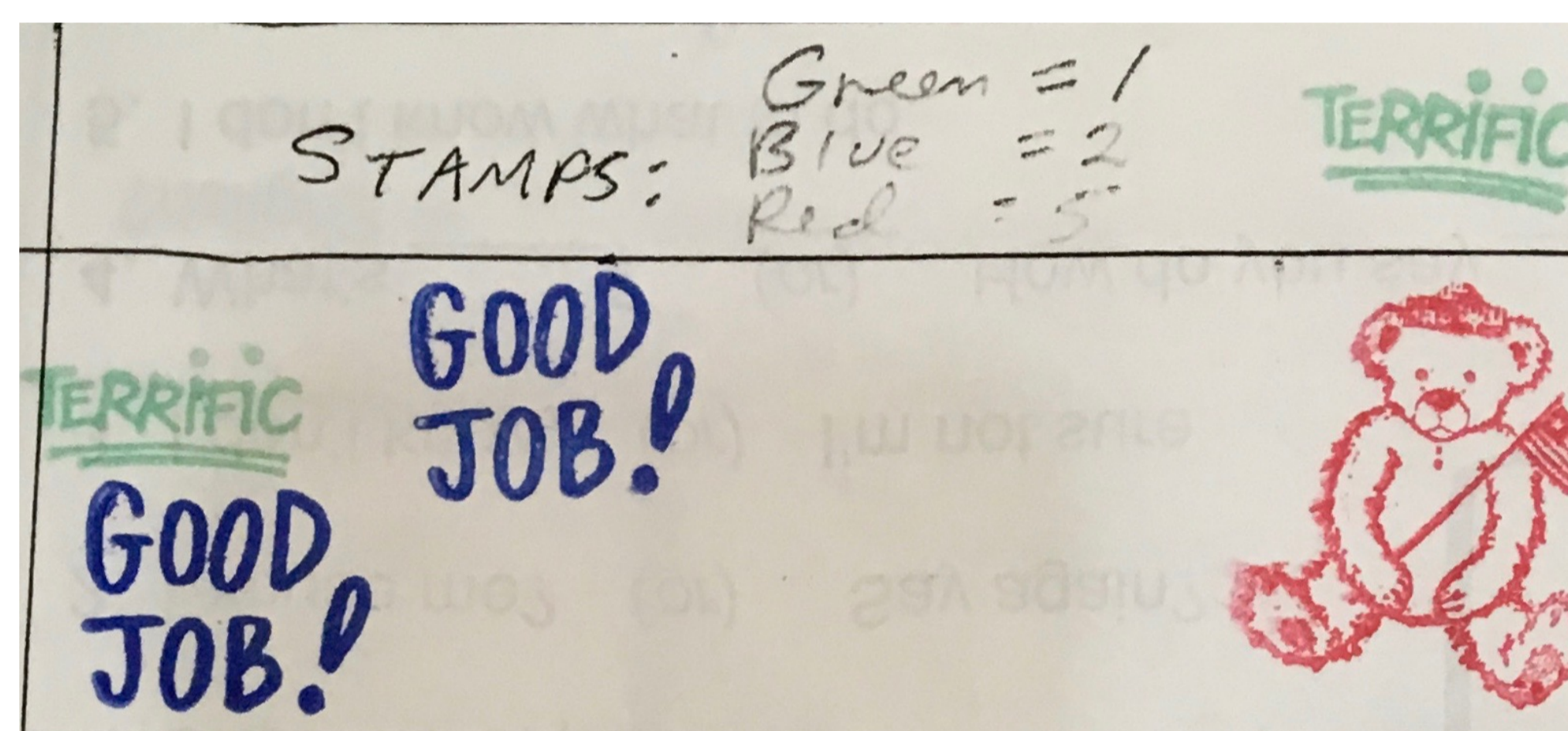
Readiness Quizzes help, but...

Within the first four or so class meetings, it was noticed that weekly participation to this end was not happening among some students.

Two approaches were employed.

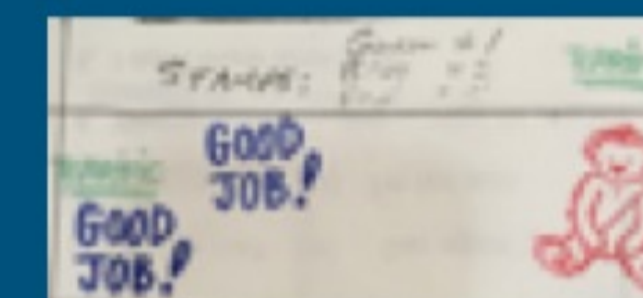
- 1) Access to Midterm Material was linked to the completion of online Preparation and Review quizzes and this was told to the students regularly.
- 1) An analog point system was used to reward students completed their Preparation and Review quizzes ON TIME. Those who did not and those who were late were not rewarded even if they did it by the following class.

These two approaches made for a favorable departure from a previous approach of naming and shaming laggards in class.



Analog Point System - It's Tangible and it works!

The point system used include three stamps: a Green, Blue, and Red stamp.



The Green stamp is worth 1 point, the Blue is 2, and the Red is 5.

These were used in class to encourage Student to Student and Student to Teacher interaction.

This Stamp System was also used reward outside class activity was a new application.

Analog Point System - Coding

In order to delineate which stamps were awarded for in class work, such were applied in a right side up manner. Stamps used to reward students for doing online work on time were stamped upside down, thus making for an easy visual.

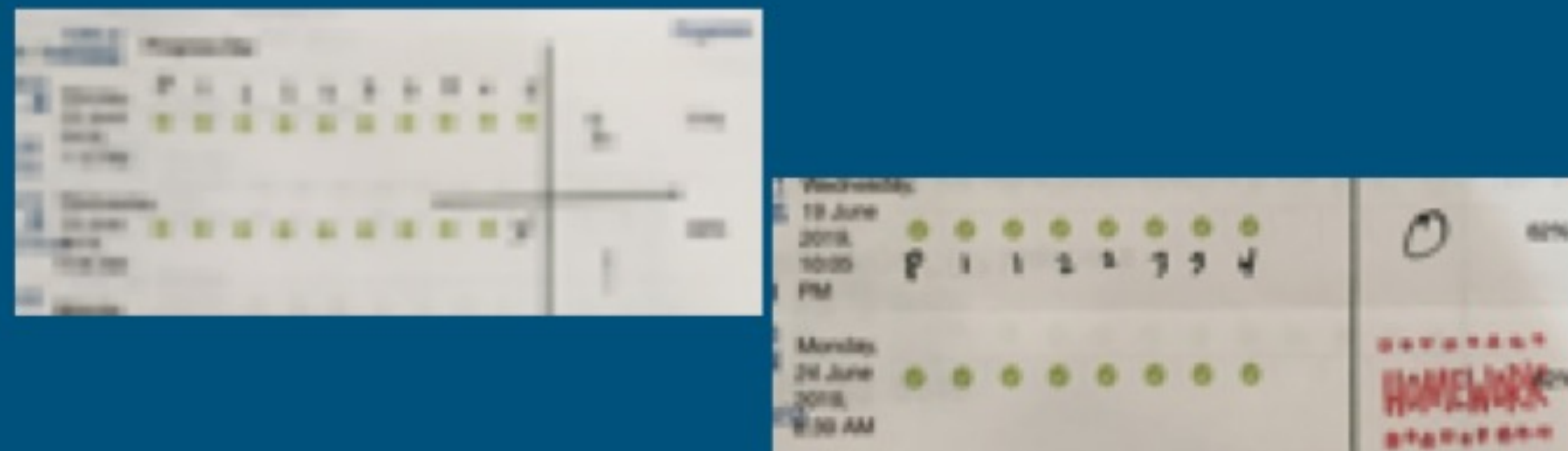


Analog Point System - Teacher's View

It is argued that this introduction of a positive reinforcement schedule was a sufficient external additional motivator for most students in completing their work on time.

It was also observed that the overall feeling in the class was more positive than negative.

When the Moodle Progress Bar is used, it is easy for the teacher to check student performance either on a print out before class, or online during class.



Discussion

Simply having an elaborate e-learning component is no guarantee for full curricular participation.

Incorporating other adjuncts into the aggregate, such as a reward system in this case, can make for a class milieu that is more likely to

- 1) realize curricular goals and
- 2) contribute to an atmosphere that is more positive for both the learner and the teacher.

The benefit is that the role of the teacher as a classroom police officer is reduced and the role of the teacher to task facilitator is elevated.

Keeping the literature in mind, application of such a point system is not limited to a classroom environment, but to online learning environments where teacher supervision is an expectation.

Sources

- Allen, Christopher, Stella K. Hadjistassou, and David Richardson. "Self-Evaluation Using iPads in EFL Teaching Practice." In *CALL Communities and Culture - Short Papers from EUROCALL 2016*, edited by Salomi Papadima-Sophocleous, Linda Bradley, and Sylvie Thouésny, 20-24. Research-publishing.net, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2016.eurocall2016.532>.
- Carlson, Gordon D. "Idea Sharing: How to Maximize Participation in a Mixed-Level English Class," n.d., 14.
- Fu, Tingfeng, and Hossein Nassaji. "Corrective Feedback, Learner Uptake, and Feedback Perception in a Chinese as a Foreign Language Classroom." *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching* 6, no. 1 (March 31, 2016): 159. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2016.6.1.8>.
- Goetz, Thomas H. "Readiness Quizzes for a Moodle Environment." *Hokusei Gakuen University Research Social Welfare Bulletin* 55, no. 1 (March 2018): 127-36.
- Haider, Md Zulfeqar, and Elina Akhter. "Extensive Reading in EFL Classroom at Secondary Schools in Bangladesh: Current Practices and Future Possibilities." *International Education Studies* 5, no. 3 (May 3, 2012): p126. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v5n3p126>.
- Okazaki, Hironobu, Shinichi Hashimoto, Eri Fukuda, Haruhiko Nitta, and Kazuhiko Kido. "Development of an E-Learning Program for Extensive Reading." In *CALL: Using, Learning, Knowing, EUROCALL Conference, Gothenburg, Sweden, 22-25 August 2012, Proceedings*, 228-33. Research-publishing.net, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2012.000057>.