

Flipping the Script

Students as Teachers on Nearpod

by Guido Kovalskys and Josh Tappan



Overview

As educators push for student-centered classrooms, instructional strategies such as peer review¹ and student presentations² emerge as best practices. However, many educators who have incorporated student presentations and peer review into their curriculum report less than stellar results. “I thought that student audience members would be able to give feedback or ask questions during student presentations,” says Jessica Vannasdall, a 7th grade ELA and History teacher in Arcadia, CA. “But, I typically hear comments like, ‘I liked it,’ ‘good job,’ or ‘I learned a lot.’ This shows me that my class isn’t engaged.” As teachers know all too well, vague peer feedback is not constructive and can indicate that students in the audience are not engaged in a way that maximizes learning outcomes for both the presenters and the audience. Common concerns arise over and over; students do not think critically about elements of a presentation, are unclear about assignment objectives, do not see the value of giving feedback, or are uncomfortable commenting on their peers’ work. Jessica began to wonder whether student-led presentations were worth the large amount of work and class time. In a last push to incorpo-

rate these practices into her classroom, Jessica began using Nearpod to keep students engaged and focused during peer presentations.

While Jessica was accustomed to using Nearpod to create and lead lessons in her classroom, it occurred to her students might use the tool to design and deliver their own presentations to each other³. Instead of students ‘lecturing’ to the class using typical one-way presentation methods, they could include audience questions, polls, and other activities for culminating student projects on both world religions and Greek roots.

“*Students took an enormous amount of pride and ownership in their Nearpod presentations. It empowered my students to act as the teacher, offer questions, and get feedback. The level of engagement for this type of project was impressive.*”

Jessica Vannasdall,
7th grade ELA and History teacher in Arcadia, CA.

¹ Bostock, Stephen. “Student peer assessment.” Learning Technology (2000).

² Bargh, John A. and Yaacov Schul. “On the cognitive benefits of teaching.” Journal of Educational Psychology 72, no. 5 (1980): 593.

³ Vannasdall, Jessica. “Being the teacher for the day.” <https://www.storehouse.co/stories/o9jxn-being-the-teacher-for-the-day>

The Nearpod team loved Jessica’s approach of making students lesson creators and facilitators. Research shows that when students are expected to teach others, they learn and recall more⁴. One of the lead researchers in the study, John Nestojko, explains, “When teachers prepare to teach, they tend to seek out key points and organize information into a coherent structure. Our results suggest that students also turn to these types of effective learning strategies when they expect to teach.” One of Mrs. Vannasdall’s students reinforce Nestojko’s conclusion by reporting, “I liked using Nearpod for presentations. It was a lot of fun, and as the presenter, I learned a lot.”

Collaborative projects like Jessica’s also contribute to better learning outcomes compared to individual assignments⁵. In addition to benefitting student presenters, Nearpod’s interactivity benefits those in the audience because active engagement in the learning process leads to improvements in attitude and academics⁶.

After learning about Jessica’s students-as-teachers approach, Nearpod explored whether this model would succeed in classrooms across the United States. In the spring semester of 2015, Nearpod designed a research study to determine how student-generated Nearpod presentations affected teacher and student perceptions of communication, collaboration, creativity, and engagement - 21st Century Skills that are of utmost important for college and career readiness⁷. 20 teachers and 1,263 students took part in the study, which involved small groups of students collaborating to create and present a Nearpod lesson. To collect data on the project, Nearpod administered a pre-survey and post-survey to all participating teachers and students.

⁴ John F. Nestojko et al., “Expecting to teach enhances learning and organization of knowledge in free recall of text passages,” *Memory & Cognition* Volume 42, Issue 7 (October 2014): pp 1038-1048. 10.3758/s13421-014-0416-z

⁵ Prince, Michael. “Does active learning work? A review of the research.” *JOURNAL OF ENGINEERING EDUCATION-WASHINGTON-* 93 (2004): 223-232.

⁶ Bonwell, Charles C., and James A. Eison. *Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom*. 1991 ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Reports. ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, The George Washington University, One Dupont Circle, Suite 630, Washington, DC 20036-1183, 1991.

⁷ “Framework for 21st Century Learning.” Partnership for 21st Century Skills. March 2011, http://www.p21.org/storage/documents/1.__p21_framework_2-pager.pdf.

Project & Research Implementation

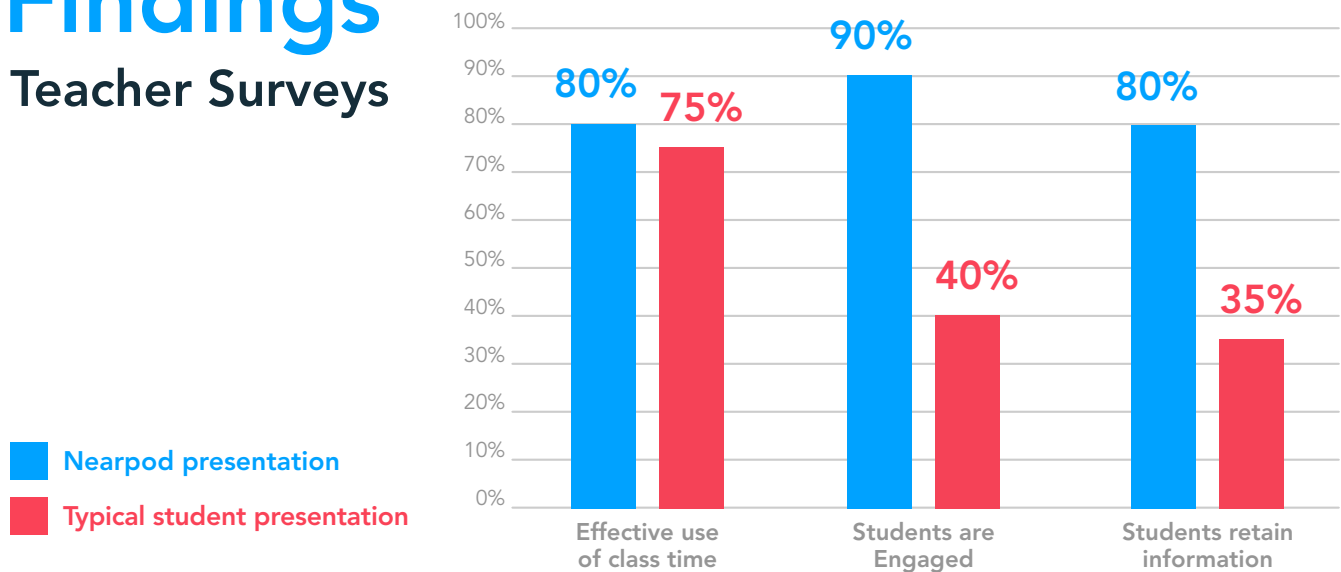
The educators who participated in the project teach English/Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, and Math in grades 5-12. Student-generated presentations addressed a range of topics from nutrient groups and renewable resources, to trigonometric ratios and post-World War II America. Teachers who participated in the study were responsible for administering and taking a pre-survey before the project started, and a post-survey after students had designed their lesson and presented it to their peers.

“Nearpod challenges [the student presenters’] peers to retain the information presented. The features available including Draw It, open ended questions, and polls increased student engagement.”



Findings

Teacher Surveys



Teachers were asked to rate what degree they agreed with various statements about their students' presentations:

- 75% of teachers agreed that typical student presentations were an effective use of class time
- 80% agree that student Nearpod presentations were effective use of class time
- 40% of teachers thought that students were engaged during typical student presentations
- 90% of teachers reported that their students were engaged while their peers presented using Nearpod
- 35% of teachers agreed that students retain information when their peers present
- 80% of teachers found that students retained information when their peers presented on Nearpod.

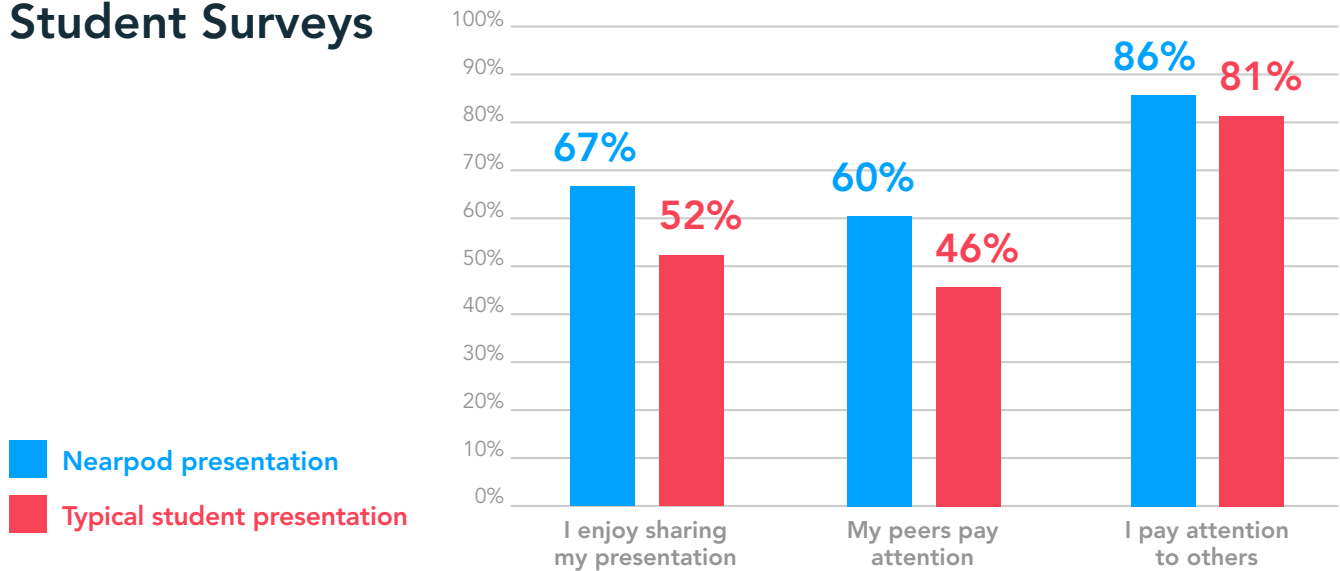
- 80% of teachers agreed that students improved their communication skills during the Nearpod presentation project.

"It really made the students 'know their stuff.' Nearpod was such an awesome tool to help them communicate to their fellow students about what they knew and at the same time check for understanding."

- 95% of teachers agreed that Nearpod allowed students to creatively present material.

"I was very impressed with the student presentations. Nearpod encourages students to think creatively."

Student Surveys



"Nearpod lets you have immediate feedback from the audience, which helps us evaluate the quality of our presentation."

"The activities make the audience think and pay attention."

- 52% of students agreed that they enjoy sharing their work in a typical student presentation
- 67% of students agreed that they enjoyed sharing their work with others during the Nearpod presentation

"I had a fun time, much more interactive than I thought."

"If we could do this more often I think projects would be more fun."

- 46% of students agreed that their peers pay attention during typical student presentations
- 60% of students agreed that their peers paid attention during the Nearpod presentation, *"Overall, I thought Nearpod helped keep my classmates interested and was much better than a regular Powerpoint presentation."*

- 81% of students reported that they pay attention during typical student presentations
- 86% of students reported that they paid attention during their peers' Nearpod presentations,

- 66% of students found that making the presentations using Nearpod allowed them to be creative.

- 55% of students agreed that presenting in front of the class using Nearpod improved their communication skills.

- **70%** of students enjoyed using Nearpod to create their presentations. While we would love for this number to be 100%, we understand that sometimes students prefer creating projects using another medium, and strongly encourage teachers to give students choice of different methods to demonstrate mastery.

- **67%** of students thought it was easy to collaborate with group members during the Nearpod presentation project.

“I thought it was really fun to be able to be with friends and create something that people can use to learn.”

“It was fun to work with people I am used to not working with. It is also

good to see how people work and how they do things differently than other people. It was good to work with people that were not afraid to show their creativity.”

Jessica’s students, and students across the world, will encounter issues outside of the classroom like handling dissenting opinions, building consensus, and managing different communication styles. Exposure to these challenges during collaborative class projects presents valuable learning opportunities. Collaborating on a Nearpod presentation helps to build students’ abilities to negotiate, compromise, and cooperate.

Conclusions & Looking Ahead

Nearpod is an ideal tool for student-generated presentations. When Nearpod is used by students to deliver lessons, student presenters build communication, collaboration, and creativity skills while maximizing learning for their peer-audience. Using Nearpod as a presentation platform instills confidence in student presenters and ensures that audience members remain engaged while their peers are presenting. While Nearpod was initially designed for teachers to design and deliver presentations, the “students as teachers” model is a innovative and effective use of the platform.

We hope that other teachers will join Jessica Vannasdall in giving students a voice, a choice, and effective tools for project-based work.

For any questions or further information about the study, please contact joshuat@nearpod.com.

Appendix 1

Teacher and Student Quotes

“I was very impressed with the student presentations. Nearpod encourages students to think creatively and more importantly, challenges their peers to retain the information presented... the features available, including draw it, open ended questions, and polls **increased student engagement.**”

“Nearpod has completely changed how I teach my 10th and 11th grade classes. This project has been amazing, and Nearpod really speaks the kids’ language.”

“It gave me a **great opportunity to learn** more by doing it on my own and it made my communication skills stronger.”

“Creating this project with my partner was fun and allowed me to be creative.”

“It is **really cool** how there are different interactive features you can use in you presentation.”

“ I had a fun time, much more **interactive** than I thought. ”

“ It’s amazing I have never seen something so cool that allowed others to take quizzes or drawings or fill in the blank. I would love to use nearpod more frequently depending if we have time. Overall I love the nearpod project. ”

“ I liked using nearpod for presentations, it was a **lot of fun** to make the presentations especially because I liked the subject, and I feel like as the presenter I learned a lot. I can only hope that, based on the quiz scores, I was able to teach my classmates something as well. ”

“ I like doing the Nearpod presentations. It is a **fun and creative way to learn.** ”

“ Please contact the eight grade teachers about this too. At clover middle school. I have enjoyed it very much. **It was awesome.** ”

“ It was fun to work with people I am used to not working with. It is also good to see how people work and how they do things differently then other people. It was good to work with people that were not afraid to show their creativity. ”



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