

Teaching Tip: Prepare Your Students to Participate

Class Participation Assignments (CPAs), created by Drs. Lynn and Robert Gillette, for their 2016 Lilly International Spring Conference presentation, "Ready to Learn: How to Get Your Students to Come to Class Prepared," are assignments to prepare students for class participation in which they answer a series of questions about that day's reading **before class** and contribute to discussion **in class**. They cannot earn credit unless they speak!

CPAs are graded Pass/Fail. Students earn credit by:

1. "Showing good-faith effort on every question;
2. Bringing a copy with them to class;
3. Attending class to modify and expand their answers, as well as add value to class discussion."

All criteria must be met to receive credit

CPAs reward students for both preparing for and engaging in class and Drs. Gillette emphasize their value to professors as well: instead of creating more for you to grade *after* class, CPAs are a way for you to **reward students with immediate feedback in class** through discussion. Only a cursory check by the professor through the pile of papers is necessary, because the students know that they must contribute to discussion in order to earn credit. In other words, their written answers should provide (the start of) their in-class discussion. You should hear their contributions in class.

CPAs have the added bonus of **helping you learn your students' names** more quickly at the start of the semester, which is critical for **building a community** in the classroom. They also **take the emphasis off performance goals and put them on learning goals**, creating more significant learning experiences in the classroom.

The amount of questions you create for your students will vary based on the material, but Drs. Gillette recommend starting with 5-8. Though developing good, open-ended questions that allow your students to grapple productively with the course material may be time consuming, the effects they will have on your students and on your course are well worth it.

Remember to **enforce the discussion rule**: if a student has answered the questions before class but has not participated in class, then they cannot earn credit for the CPA. Such reinforcement will both encourage and enhance class participation, allowing you to create a community much sooner and to get your students invested in engaging aspects of your course right from the beginning.