



Preparation in the Liberal Arts Classroom: Beyond the Anticipatory Set “The readiness is all.”

Middle School Shared Wisdom Communities: March Meeting
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I. From the *Cult of Pedagogy* blog:

ANTICIPATORY SET

(noun) A brief portion of a lesson given at the very beginning to get students' attention, activate prior knowledge, and prepare them for the day's learning. Also known as *advance organizer, hook, or set induction*.

When you start a lesson, you could begin it with something like this: *Today we're going to continue our study of hygiene. Or you could get more creative: You could come into the room, your hair a mess, with dirt under your fingernails, stained clothing, your teeth covered in yellow goo, with little signs taped all over you that say scabies, diarrhea, hepatitis A, hookworm, and lice.*

Which of these two approaches will be better at grabbing students' attention?

The second one is an example of a creative *anticipatory set* — a bit at the very beginning of a lesson that focuses students on what they are going to learn that day. Anticipatory sets can be very simple, like sharing a brief anecdote that connects to the lesson or giving students a problem to work out, or they can require more planning, like performing a short skit or showing a series of thought-provoking images. The point of the anticipatory set is to get students curious, wake up their brains, and give them a taste of what they are about to learn.



- II. Common downfalls of the anticipatory set:
 - A. Reinforcing the idea that learning must be entertaining in order to be relevant
 - B. Choosing “hooks” that are fun/exciting at the expense of being related to the lesson
 - C. Too many video clips!
 - D. Too short!

- III. Preparation: Reclaiming the fullness of the anticipatory set
 - A. Key differences:
 - 1. Grounded in student experience
 - 2. Wonder over entertainment
 - 3. Significant portion of class time
 - 4. Active engagement over passive participation
 - B. Examples of preparation:
 - 1. *(Prayer)*
 - 2. Ponder a definition.
 - a) *Write down as many definitions as you can for . . .*
 - b) *Use the word “growth” in four different sentences.*
 - c) *How would you define love?*
 - 3. Re-view previous lessons/logoi.
 - a) Ensure that *students* are providing this review, not the teacher.
 - b) *Consider a parable from various points of view.*
 - 4. Draw on student experience.
 - a) *Think about a time in your life when...*
 - b) *Have you ever...*
 - 5. Respond to a thought-provoking question.
 - a) *Is it more satisfying to work through an argument, or to be right?*
 - b) *Do you think you could make it through a whole day without using multiplication? Why or why not?*
 - 6. Consider a famous quote.
 - a) *Commonplace book*
 - b) *Quote wall*
 - 7. Others?

The secret to an effective preparation: *know your logos.*