

## Online Conference

I watched an online conference entitled *WOW Wednesdays: (Wednesdays without Worksheets)* presented by Pat Goodwin and Susan Baker on October 21, 2015. This video showed educators how to teach with more rigor in a way that promotes student engagement without worksheets. They describe how sometimes teachers get in a “worksheet rut” where they are giving students nothing but worksheets and it gets boring for the students as well as the teachers. This conference had multiple teachers giving ideas that they use in their own classrooms to get away from worksheets. There were six different ideas of how to get students engaged without a worksheet. For example, the first teacher described how she used “I have/ who has cards” in her classroom. The top of the card has an “I have” section that has an answer to a question and the bottom of the card has a “who has” section posing a question or definition. Every student in the room gets a card and when a student says “who has blank” the students that has the answer to that question will say “I have answer, who has blank” and read their card. This will continue until all the cards are read. The “I have/Who has” cards provide review and also forces the students to think forwards and backwards and is set up so that even though it is not every student's turn to read their card, they have to be listening for to be able to answer the question their answer matches. Other activities they described were a vocab matching game, beach ball chatter (where students throw a ball and answer the question their thumb lands on), a play on spoons, and a deal or no deal game. At the end of the video conference they asked students in their building what they thought about WOW Wednesdays. Some students said they like that they get to play, that no paper work is awesome, but the majority said they liked WOW Wednesdays because they do not have to work, or that they have no work. This does not sound good out of context, students saying they do not learn, however, having seen all the things these teachers are doing, you realize that these activities are amazing because the students are learning without even realizing they are.

I think I can take almost all of the ideas from the session and implement them in my classroom. My students love when I use things like Kahoot! for review. They think it is a fun game and do not even realize that they are reviewing skills. By implementing things like the matching game, or Deal or No Deal for review, my students would respond better to the learning rather than just sitting and getting a worksheet. Allowing them to have fun with playing Deal or No Deal, for example, and having them answer questions on the content we are reviewing and adding incentives like prizes, such as the game on television does, that my students will want to pay attention and therefore be engaged in the learning without even knowing that they are learning. I especially liked the Beach ball chatter game and could see it working well for my students. You get a beach ball and paste questions all over the beach ball. Students then will group up in pairs to toss the ball to one another. Whichever question is closest to your right thumb gets answered. My students have a long 80 minute period with me daily and often fidgety. This would allow them to be up and moving and being active while also learning the material.

This session, without exactly saying it, refers to active learning. Everything they described were students all participating in either a collaborative group or in a whole class setting where they were playing games based around the content and not just sitting and working on worksheets alone. Meaningful learning requires learners who are active-actively engaged by a meaningful task (Howland et al., 2012). All of the activities described in the session, *WOW Wednesdays* does just that. I cannot say that just from watching the session that the presenters had a great deal of knowledge about web based technologies. While I thought all of the ideas presented were great, none of them used web based tools.

All ideas used paper, other manipulatives, and smart boards to achieve their goals rather than the web. However, I believe the concept of the session would translate into some web based technologies.

I, personally, think that there is a great value in these type of conferences. They are a great way to collaborate with other educators who you would not have access to otherwise. These have a great chance of success. Going back to Michael Wesch's video, *The Machine is Us/ing Us*, people are always looking and using the web to connect with other people and obtain new ideas. This is something that does just that. We are curious, naturally, and these online conferences are easy to access and can give you answers and ideas about anything you are wanting to know. I do think, however, that while it allows presenters to get their ideas out there, it is hard to have a conversation with that person or other people watching these sessions. There are no comment boards, or discussion boards (that I could find) to talk to other educators using or trying these methods and no way to ask the presenter themselves a question about something they presented on or said. I think there is a great potential for these type of conferences, and with just the addition of this I think they would be more fantastic than they already are.

Howland, J. Jonassen, D., & Marra, R., (2012). *Meaningful Learning with Technology, 4th ed.*, Boston, MA: Pearson.

Welsch, M. (2007, March 8). *The machine is us/ing us (final version)*. [Video File]. Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLIgopyXT\\_g&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLIgopyXT_g&feature=youtu.be)