

## SYNTHESIS AND APPLICATION ESSAY 2

Through my participation in the Certificate of Accomplishment in Teaching program, I have learned many techniques to make myself a better teacher. The lessons and techniques I learned from three workshops, especially, have made me more effective in the classroom.

I participated in *Effective Questioning Strategies* before I began teaching. This course focused on how to ask better questions. Since I took this workshop, I have realized that questioning is important in a classroom. Asking the right kind of question can increase student participation and understanding.

I also took *Helping Students Organize Information: Concept Mapping* before I began teaching. The purpose of this workshop was to learn how to create a visual representation of information for students. My teaching relies on graphs, which is one pictorial representation of a lot of information, but this course provoked me to start putting other types of information into a picture.

A month before I started teaching lab sections, I took *Establishing Credibility and Authority in the Classroom*. I chose to take this seminar because as I approached my first teaching assignment I worried that my age could make it difficult for me to establish credibility with my students. This course focused on verbal and nonverbal communication as well as conveying content expertise.

Before taking *Effective Questioning Strategies*, I assumed that asking questions in class would be simple and obvious. Through this workshop I realized that there are several types of questions and to be an effective teacher I needed to create questions deliberately. My first instinct during a lecture is to ask: “does this make sense?” While this type of

structuring question gives students an opportunity to speak up, it does not encourage students to do so. The question is vague and it may be embarrassing to answer no. A much more specific question (“what happens to the price level is aggregate demand increases?”) gives the students a chance to prove their understanding (to themselves and to me) or to pinpoint a concept that they may be struggling with. The specific question is also more likely to entice students to answer. I mentally refer to this workshop each time I ask a question to a silent room. If the students do not answer, I have not given them a good question. I have also changed my questioning technique on worksheets. Many times it is easy to ask for a specific answer, but on worksheets that connect two larger concepts the way I ask each question is important. For instance, in order to connect the money market to the aggregate supply and aggregate demand model and further to changes in the Phillips curve, I created a worksheet that led students through each of these models one at a time to trace the ultimate effect of monetary policy in each.

I have gone beyond the recommendations of this workshop in my classroom in order to encourage class participation. I use an online voting system that gives students the chance to vote for one of three choices: Got it, Unsure, Lost Me. After presenting a concept, I ask my students use their cell phones or laptops to vote. Because it is anonymous students are more likely to vote that they are Unsure or Lost. This gives me instant feedback and allows me time to ask for questions. If the results show that many students are not sure of the concept, I present it in a new way. If the results show that the class understands the concept, I can quiz them on it or move on.

Taking *Helping Students Organize Information: Concept Mapping* helped me think about how to present information in a way that is most accessible to students. This

workshop reminded me to emphasize the big picture first, and then to imbed the details into that picture. In doing this, I have noticed that student ask questions about logic rather than about individual calculations. I have created literal concept maps, for instance a diagram of monetary policy tools, but I have also organized information in lists. For instance, when calculating the profit of a firm in a perfectly competitive market or in a monopolistic market, I list specific steps the students should take. These steps are nearly identical for both models, which lets students focus on the similarities and differences between the two rather than being concerned with remembering two seemingly separate processes.

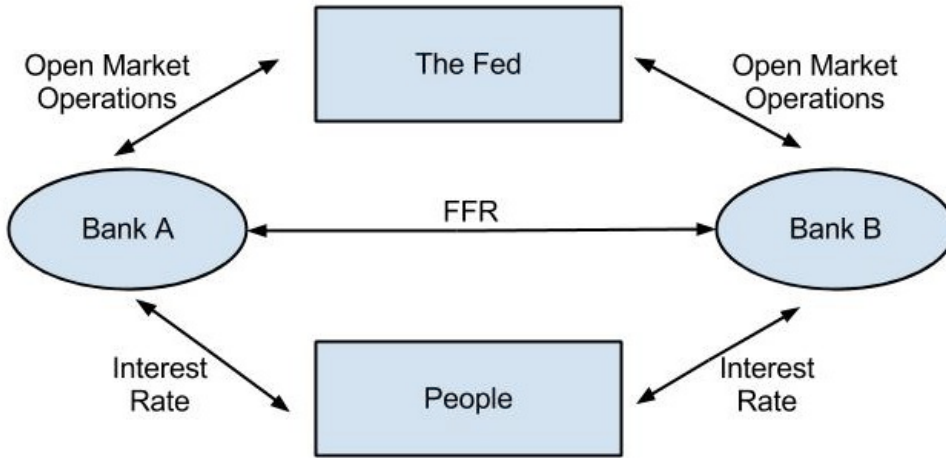
I was interested in the *Establishing Credibility and Authority in the Classroom* workshop because I was worried that as a young teacher my students would not take me seriously, but some of the tips I learned have improved my teaching beyond just establishing credibility. In fact, in my first semester of teaching, one of my students was older than me (and happened to announce that fact on the first day of class). Through the workshop, I learned that it is important to speak confidently and fluently. This helps me establish credibility but it also makes my lectures easier to follow for the students. I remind myself of this whenever a student asks me an unexpected question. Rather than muddling through an answer, I take a few seconds to gather my thoughts before I respond. Physically, the workshop suggested making eye contact and moving around the classroom. These techniques also help me stay in touch with my students by reading their expressions and drawing their attention to me as I teach. I have also taken inspiration from this workshop to establish my authority in other ways. Firstly, I create a rigid syllabus, which conveys to students that I am an authority they cannot debate with on. For example, my

syllabus explicitly states that no extra credit will be offered and that makeup assignments will only be offered with an official note excusing the absence. Since I have incorporated these into my syllabus, I have not had any students try to push me on either of these dimensions. Secondly, I have chosen to dress very professionally. I think that this also adds to the impression I give of being an expert and authority.

Each of these workshops has helped me become a more effective teacher. I took some recommendations literally, but I have also used the general ideas in each workshop to create new techniques. I have learned to ask better questions, present information in a more accessible way, and establish myself as a trustworthy source of economics.

**Appendix:**

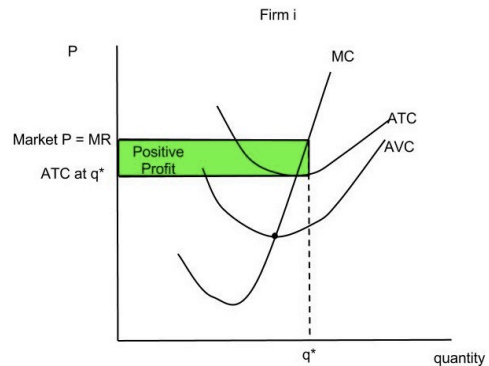
Monetary Policy Tools Diagram:



Steps to find Firm Profit...

In a Perfect Monopoly:

- Step 1: Set  $MR = MC$  to find  $q^*$
- (Step 2: Find  $P^*$  at  $q^*$ )
- Step 3: Find ATC at  $q^*$
- Step 4: Draw profit box  $q^*(P-ATC)$
- Step 5: Determine if profit is positive or negative



In a Perfectly Competitive Market:

- Step 1: Set  $MR = MC \rightarrow Q^*$
- Step 2: Find  $D$  at  $Q^* \rightarrow P^*$
- Step 3: Find ATC at  $Q^*$
- Step 4: Draw profit box  $Q^*(P-ATC)$
- Step 5: Evaluate profit (+/-)

