Recent research and college/university student surveys illustrate that Generation Z Students/Learners do not feel engaged by passive learning anymore. In a society where most Generation Z Students/Learners rely on technology for mostly everything, it is imperative that institutions of higher learning examine effective methods for keeping them engaged. Failing to recognize the necessity for accommodating Generation Z Students/Learners will result in college and universities experiencing a substantial trend of low attendance, low academic achievement, increased withdrawals, and declining graduation rates. Based on research, data findings, and the writer's college classroom experiences, Generation Z Students/Learners aspire to learn where they can be hands-on and directly involved in the learning process. After having taught students from the elementary level all the way to the university level, this panelist focuses on facilitating rather than lecturing, incorporating technology usage of Smart Phones, IPods, IPads, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Educational Apps, and developing social media inspired assignments. These have proven effective in increasing student zeal, excitement, and engagement. A favorite activity of mine required students to utilize an audio device to access music with an American theme pertaining to the American Revolution. Students explained the significance of the composer writing it and other components of the meaning to best describe the patriotism and happiness that Americans possibly felt after gaining their independence from England in 1776.

**My Innovation**

"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn." - Benjamin Franklin.

Although, this quote was made by one of the greatest Enlightenment thinker’s centuries ago, it is still relevant today in the 21st century especially as it relates to young college students. Colleges and universities are vastly filled with millennials, better known as, “Generation Z,” who are gamers, bloggers, tech savvy, social media addicts, and skilled electronic gadget users. They are accustomed to accessing information in a matter of seconds without much effort. Further, Generation Z learners are motivated by convenience, self-pacing, self-guidance, and ultimately being in control. Moreover, Institutions of Higher Learning have recently discovered through research and student surveys that Generation Z learners are no longer passive learners. Generation Z learners desire to be engaged and hands on.

Colleges and universities enrollment consist mainly of a generation of college students who rely mostly on technology for everything. Seemiller and Grace (2016) report that these Digital Natives (18 – 20) comprise the dominant generation of student’s currently entering college. Further, Generation Z learners and Digital Natives find it extremely difficult to complete traditional assignments such as listening to a lecture and taking notes, reading a textbook or writing a research paper. It may be worthwhile to rethink standard or major assignments as a way to appeal and support modern students (Mohr, Mohr 2017). College and University Professors must acknowledge that Generation Z learners, network, socialize, communicate, and learn differently than Generation X and Baby Boomers do, and they must be willing to develop college course assignments that are conducive and relevant to Generation Z learners. College professors should be willing to develop course activities that embed technology, real world connections, and prepare them for their careers. According to Kathleen Mohr and Eric Mohr (2017) instructors should carefully explain the rationale and value of assignments, highlighting how a task or project helps students learn what will be necessary in the workplace or life beyond college. There are several innovative assignments that college and university professors can employ in their courses for Generation Z learners that require facilitation rather than lecturing. Technology usage promotes motivation and excitement, student engagement, and academic success. These assignments include the following: Open Class Discussions, Current Events, and Group Projects. These innovative activities keep
students engaged, motivated, make learning easier and fun, and promote academic success!

Open Class Discussions is one of the most effective methods for keeping Generation Z learners engaged. Open Class Discussions gives them the perception that they are in control and free from traditional college courses bombarded with lecturing and note taking. Current Events provides students with the opportunity to make real world connections with the past and the present. Moreover, Current Events allow students to utilize social media, YouTube videos, online articles and the internet to compare what happened in the past to the present. Lastly, Group Projects give students the opportunity to engage with one another, collaborate, feel a sense of control, freedom to be creative, hands on, and it teaches them teamwork and goal setting. These innovative assignments permit Generation Z learners to utilize their IPad, IPod, laptops, Smart phones, and even their Smart Watches to complete assignments in my class.

In conclusion, Generation Z learners want to feel involved in the learning process. They aspire to enroll in college courses with educators who understand their passion for technology, need for convenience, engagement, self-guidance, and self-reliance. Institutions of Higher Learning must be willing to adapt, modify, and improvise for students who are our future leaders.

References


