

ARTICULATION BUDDIES!

Anatomy has the potential to be at times a rote, perfunctory subject, with large lists of structures simply being memorized. In order to foster a broader understanding of the inter-relatedness of anatomical structures (instead of potentially meaningless rote memorization), I tried out a new activity this semester. Following this exercise, and the exam that succeeded it, several students mentioned to me (unsolicited) that this exercise was helpful in preparing for the exam (which this semester's students scored higher on than last semester).

As a review exercise for a general anatomy lecture course, I brought into the lecture hall a medium-quality disarticulated human skeleton model (~200 separate, individual bones). After briefly reviewing the previous lecture on articulation surfaces and the classification of joints, I randomly passed out one bone to each student present, and had them individually list the name of the bone and identify all other bones that their model matched up with (articulated with).

For the next ten minutes or so, I had each student stand and look around the room to find at least one other student (their ARTICULATION BUDDY!) who had one of the bones on their list. The pair of students then named the joint and categorized the joint type. This relatively simple exercise physically demonstrated the connections between the structure categories previously reviewed in lecture, as well as reviewing the previous exam's content of skeletal structure nomenclature.

Overall, this activity was one of many that I have given myself permission to try out as novel learning tools above and beyond the mere "covering topics" that preoccupied my lesson planning in previous semesters. I credit discussions with my faculty academy colleagues for this experimental and unexpectedly successful approach to putting learning back into the hands of my students. Whereas in previous semesters I would have reviewed concepts myself (essentially duplicating previous lecture content), this exercise allowed for the same level of review, while remaining student-driven. Poorly-prepared students were able to identify weaknesses in their preparation; well-prepared students were able to coach their peers; and I believe all students benefited from this exercise. In previous semesters, my review exercises likely benefited only the already well-prepared students.