A few years ago I was preparing for a new semester and found myself bored. Not bored with the idea of teaching General Chemistry so much as bored by the thought of standing in front of a large group of apparently disinterested students and talking... I resolved to change the class so that class had less lecture and more dialogue.

Reality was cruel. I tried to prompt open discussion by asking a question and asking for anyone to respond. After a long awkward silence, one person, and no one else, spoke up. This pattern continued for several lectures until the complaints started rolling in: “Why are you wasting our time asking us questions that we don’t want to answer?”

About the same time, I went to a colleague’s class and saw ConcepTests in action. Students voted, they discussed, they ENGAGED. In my next class, I asked a question, supplied possible answers, and asked them to vote for the correct answer. More than a third of the students participated, a 2,000% increase over my previous approach! As I continued the pattern, the student participation grew. The classroom grew lively, interactive, and fun. Since that experience, my old styles have not returned, nor has the boredom.

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