



Just a Spoon Full of Sugar...

Nancy Stephens (Arizona State University) adds an interesting twist to LINKS with part-time MBA students.

Tell us about the novel way you test the students at the beginning of the LINKS experience.

When you put the word 'quiz' in front of students, it makes them pay attention. Even though the quiz I give is open-book, not for credit, and they do it in teams, it achieves the objective of encouraging them to look at the manual and get to know it better.

In class, I shout out the question and whoever gets the answer first, their team gets to pick out of the candy bag. I went to the grocery store when the candy was on sale after Halloween or Easter, and got a bunch of fun-sized candy.

The most popular thing to buy is Reeses Pieces and those small peanut butter cups. If any instructor is going to try this, remember this tip.

It is amazing—and it takes the pressure off. The students really compete for little bits of chocolate. I think the word 'quiz' has a kind of magic to it. But it achieves the objective of getting students to look at the manual. It really works!

Do you do this during the first class?

It is the third class--the class in which we start the LINKS Simulation. It is a four-hour night class. I do the quiz first thing. But later in the class, they meet with their teams and make a decision, that night.

In the past, I found that the teams that know the manual do better in the simulation. They have a week to look at their results in the data base. The teams that have done that win.

My candy quiz is my attempt to get them all to get into pulling the information out of the manual.

It lightens up the atmosphere of the class, which is a good thing.

What is the response from the students?

They love the sweets, but they love anything that is competitive. They will compete as hard for chocolate and cookies as they will for a grade.

These students have worked all day. Anything that makes the class a bit more exciting is good.

Is there much pre-planning for this quiz?

I have about 90 to 100 students, so I have to spend about \$20-\$30 on candy. I am willing to invest that. Some universities might reimburse you for the candy. I don't even bother.

Has anything else changed in the way you teach this course?

Except for the candy quiz, which was a huge hit with the students, I am sticking to the way I have always taught this course:

- I follow Randy's advice to the tee because he is usually right.
- I always offer to have conference calls or meetings. That helps.
- And I don't answer too many questions. That helps.

