

# Success and Failure in Active Learning Instruction Sessions to Undergraduate Marketing Students

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## Background

**The Good:** Business faculty frequently invite business librarians into their classes to teach students how to use the Library's resources for their classes' projects

**The Bad:** Undergraduate marketing students see the librarians talk about the same business resources over multiple years

**The Challenge:** Move away from the "sage on stage" passive instruction delivery (where a teacher is at the front of the room teaching while students watch), and keep instruction sessions fresh and relevant

**The Solution:** Create and reinvent innovative lesson plans for each class by using active learning like polling software and in-class exercises as a pedagogical tool

**However,** using new instruction techniques is a trial-and-error process—some strategies will fail and others will succeed.

This poster details two lesson plans that utilized active learning in instructing Texas A&M University undergraduate marketing classes in the spring 2016 semester. One lesson for the MKTG 425 Retail Merchandising class had a "Choose Your Own Adventure" theme where students used the online polling software Poll Everywhere to vote on which databases they wanted to learn and then answered corresponding practice questions. The other lesson plan for the MKTG 323 Marketing Research class involved step-by-step pre-written instructions for using several databases which had students learn the databases on their own and then present their findings to the class. Based on an informal assessment that included responses to the in-class exercises, the former lesson plan failed while the latter succeeded.

The two lesson plans to the right are described in step-by-step detail, breaking down what went well, what was less effective, and what can be improved.

## What is Active Learning?

Active learning is "any instructional method that engages students in the learning process", and usually involves student activity and participation (Prince, 2004, p. 1). Active learning techniques can improve student:

- engagement
- attitude
- recall and retention of information
- thinking and writing skills
- academic achievement (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Prince, 2004)

Bonwell, C. C. & Eison, J. A. (1991). *Active learning: Creating excitement in the classroom*. Washington, D.C.: School of Education and Human Development, George Washington University. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED336049.pdf>  
Prince, M. (2004). Does active learning work? A review of the research. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 93(3), 223-231. doi:10.1002/j.2168-9830.2004.tb00809.x  
Images from Piktochart

## Lesson Plan 1: Choose Your Own Adventure

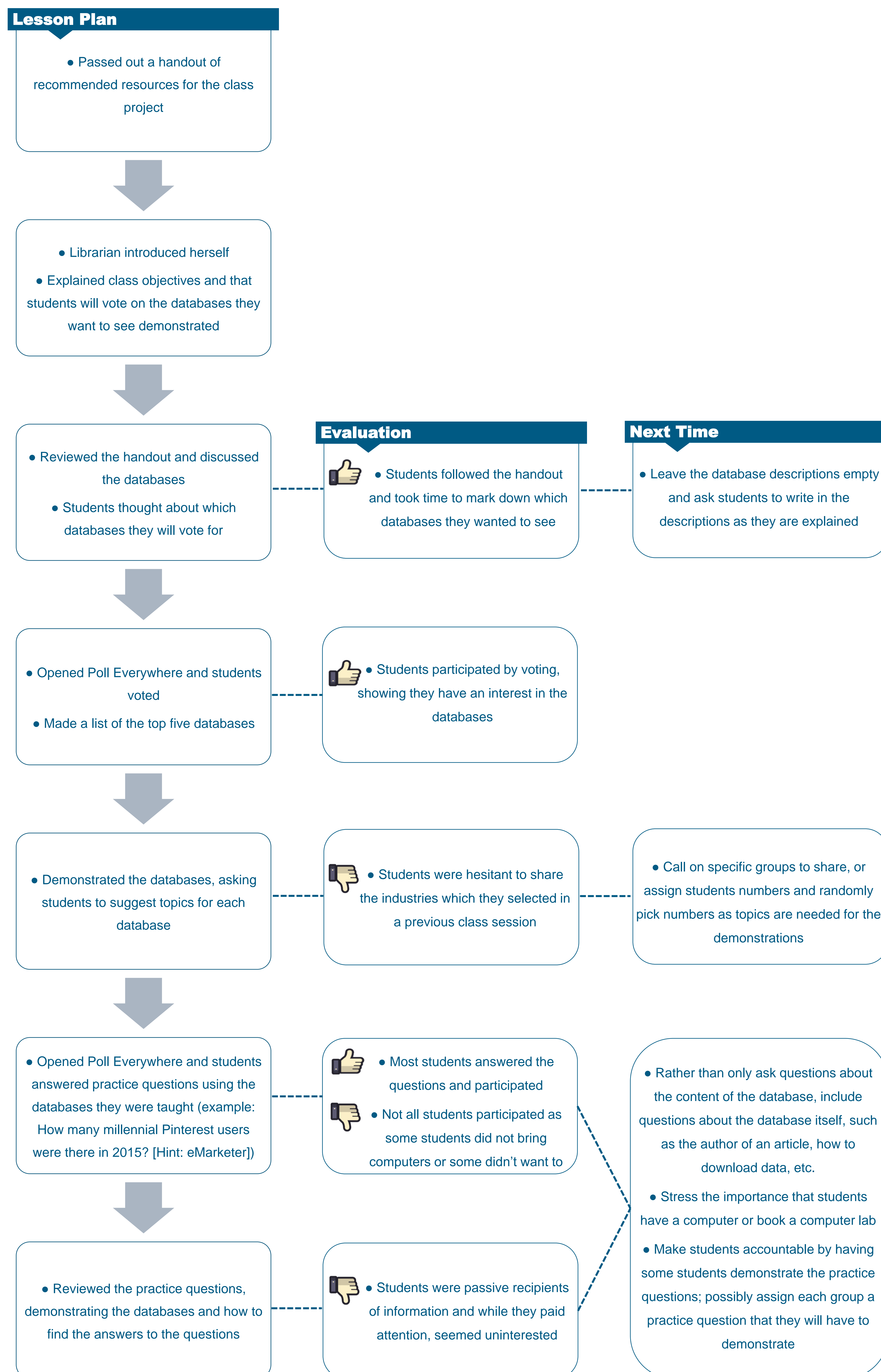
**Class:** MKTG 425 Retail Merchandising

**Lesson Plan Summary:** Students chose their own database adventure by using Poll Everywhere to vote on which of nine business databases\* they wanted to see demonstrated. The databases that were demonstrated were IBISWorld, RKMA Market Research Handbooks, Statista, eMarketer, and SimplyMap. They also used Poll Everywhere to answer practice questions using the demonstrated databases.

**Learning Outcomes:** (1) Students will become familiar with recommended databases for their project by watching database demonstrations, and (2) students will gain hands-on experience using the databases by answering practice questions

**Before Class:** Created a handout with a list of relevant databases for the term project and asked the professor to have students bring computers to class

\*Business databases included: RKMA Market Research Handbooks, IBISWorld, Statista, Mintel Reports, eMarketer, PrivCo, Factiva, Hoover's, and SimplyMap



## Lesson Plan 2: Learn and Present a Database

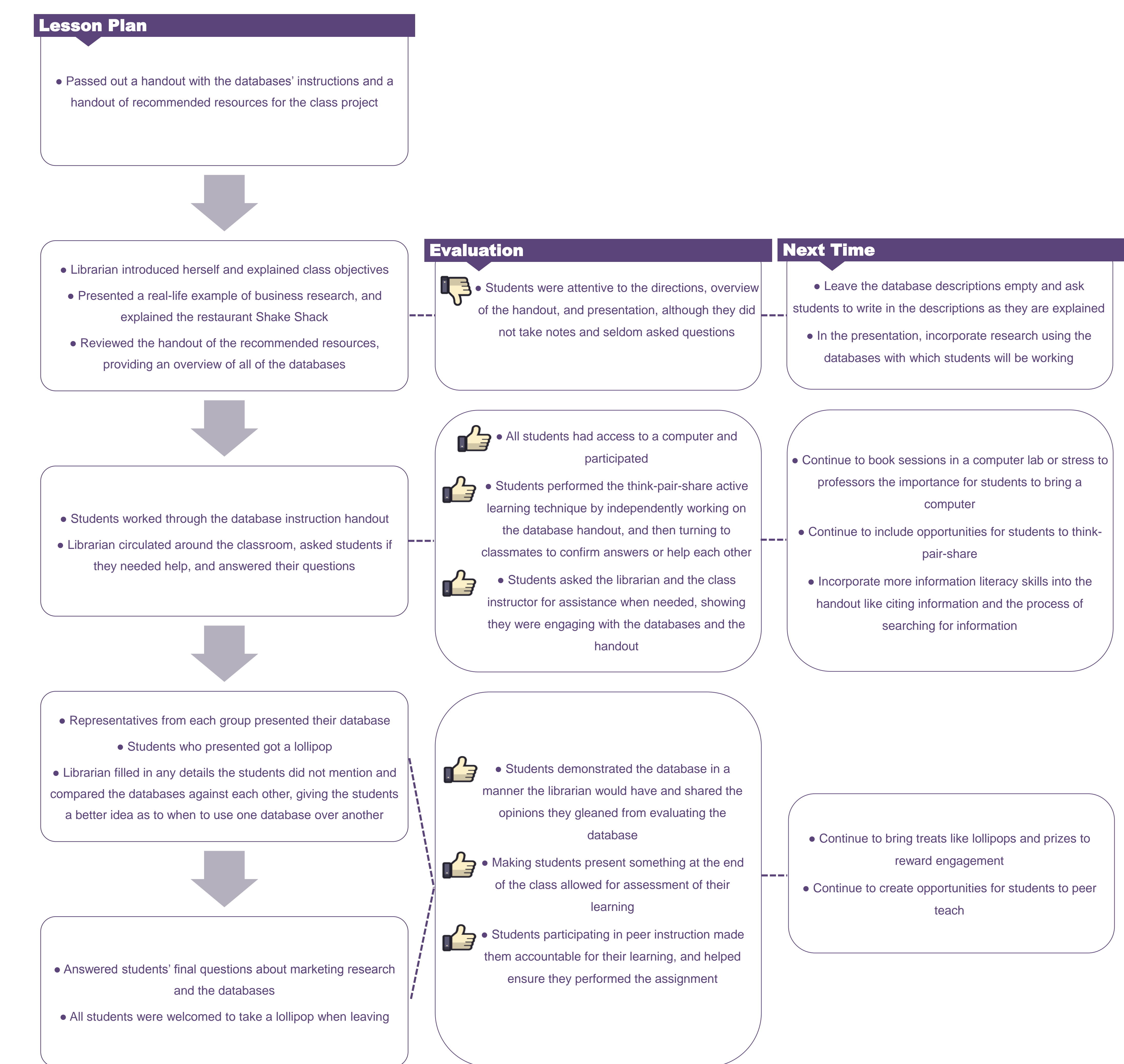
**Class:** MKTG 323 Marketing Research

**Lesson Plan Summary:** Students broke into their semester-long project's groups (four to five people per group), and each group used one database\*, performing research to determine if the restaurant Shake Shack should open a location in College Station, TX. This was a similar prompt to the class project. Each person followed step-by-step instructions that included questions they needed to answer about the databases' content (e.g. how many restaurants are in College Station?) and then evaluated the database using the five Ws and H method (who, what, where, when, why, and how). Each group selected one to three people to demonstrate the database to the class.

**Learning Outcomes:** (1) Students will become familiar with databases for their project by practicing one database, and watching classmates demonstrate other databases, (2) students will learn how to evaluate databases with the Ws and H method, and (3) students will show their database knowledge by demonstrating the database to others

**Before Class:** Created a handout with a list of relevant databases for the term project, created step-by-step instructions for each database, and confirmed with the instructor that the classroom had computers

\*Business databases included: IBISWorld, Mintel Reports, RKMA Market Research Handbooks, Factiva, SimplyMap, and BizMiner



## Conclusion

In libraries, the traditional approach to instructing databases usually involves a librarian demonstrating databases to passive students; however, there is room for innovative teaching techniques that can increase student engagement, and consequently, retention and understanding of material. For example, library instruction can utilize active learning like think-pair-share and peer instruction, as well as incorporate interactive technologies like Poll Everywhere to help facilitate library learning. By reflecting on two lesson plans that used active learning to teach library databases to marketing students, this librarian was able to understand how to improve upon active learning techniques. Some of the improvements include making students accountable for their learning through peer instruction, building in opportunities for students to think independently and discuss in groups (think-pair-share), and ensuring that every student has a computer to participate in the lesson. The librarian will continue to incorporate these improvements and active learning ideas while developing new lesson plans in order to keep the library sessions fresh and relevant.