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Guided Inquiry in a Course for Non-Science Majors

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For our non-science majors and students in the Teacher Program, we use the “Explorations in Physics” curriculum. Students work collaboratively, and they *do Physics* instead of *being told about Physics*, a pedagogical approach that is preferred both by the Physics and the Education departments. In a typical session students are asked to make predictions about certain physical situations, then observe what actually happens in those situations, and finally to reconcile their predictions with their observations. The observations usually involve the use of sensors connected to computers, which record and display the data associated with the physical activity. We cover three units of the “Explorations in Physics” curriculum, Motion, Sound, and Light, and students also do a project. Some recent projects included “The physics of archery,” “The sounds of a guitar,” “Making lenses from Jello.” In this talk I will discuss the benefits and challenges of teaching the class in this format.