

Title: Integrating a writing component into your math class

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Describe the problem, issue, or area of interest and the context. My project was aimed to address the age-old question of “Why do I have to learn this?” Many students fail to recognize the importance of mathematics and the contributions of those mathematicians who have uncovered many mysteries through the science of mathematics.

Define your desired goals, or “outcomes.” I had hoped that writing a paper on a mathematician or the use of mathematics in the field would increase the relevancy of what students are learning in my class. I also had a strong desire to integrate a writing component into my math classes so that students who may not necessarily be strong in math may find another method of contributing to their overall knowledge and understanding of the discipline.

Describe your “indicators” of success. Students gain a better knowledge of mathematics, where different concepts originated, and/or the importance of mathematics.

Describe your results. Most students found the Semester Project beneficial. Their attitudes and appreciation of mathematics were affected positively, and that alone is reason to continue to assign this project in my College Algebra courses. I want to continue to use this survey as a way of obtaining feedback from students regarding what went well and what could be improved with the Semester Project. I have asked students’ permission to use their papers and presentations for future classes to reference acceptable projects. Here is my favorite suggestion regarding the Semester Project, both for it’s candor and humor: *I think you should keep it! I complained about doing it but it was a great project and I learned a lot from the other presentations.* More survey results are attached.

Describe your evaluation methods. With the help of a colleague, I created an anonymous survey to gauge attitudes towards the Semester Project and solicit suggestions from my students via an online survey. The survey consisted of eleven Likert Scale response questions and four free-response questions. The survey was administered about half way through the following semester.

1: The Semester Project (which includes a research paper, presentation and viewing others' presentations) gave me an opportunity to work with new technology.		
Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly Agree (a)	3	17.65%
Agree (b)	10	58.82%
Not Sure (c)	0	0.00%
Disagree (d)	4	23.53%
Strongly Disagree (e)	0	0.00%

3: The Semester Project allowed me to perform using skills other than mathematics.		
Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly Agree (a)	7	41.18%
Agree (b)	9	52.94%
Not Sure (c)	0	0.00%
Disagree (d)	0	0.00%
Strongly Disagree (e)	1	5.88%

8: The Semester Project helped me to appreciate how mathematics is used in day-to-day life.		
Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly Agree (a)	5	29.41%
Agree (b)	8	47.06%
Not Sure (c)	1	5.88%
Disagree (d)	2	11.76%
Strongly Disagree (e)	1	5.88%