

Title: Learning about students' past experiences and current understanding of algebra concepts

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Describe the problem, issue, or area of interest and the context. I felt disconnected with my basic algebra computer students since I was not lecturing or collecting their work. (The class is set up in a mediated learning center and is taught through CourseCompass (MyMathLab). I wanted to be able to interact on a more personal basis with my students.

Define your desired goals, or "outcomes."

- Learn about my basic algebra computer students past experience
- Learn their current understanding of algebra concepts before I grade the test! I want to be able to react to their mistakes ASAP

Describe your "indicators" of success.

- Grade the weekly questions on a done, not done basis and send them feedback if the answer is wrong
- Ask feedback from the students regarding the whole process as the final weekly email question

Describe your project.

- Create 15 weekly email questions.
- The first one regarding their past math experience, fears and problems.
- The next 13 questions will be conceptual questions regarding the material seen during the week.
- The last question is an assessment question regarding the whole process.

Describe your results.

After receiving the answers, I read them carefully and either reply to them or meet privately with students if needed to discuss their answers. I also offer mini-lectures to increase their level of understanding on specific topics.

The last question is: "Tell me if these weekly questions and follow up helped your understanding throughout the course of the semester". Here are a few answers that I received:

- It helped me on a few concepts but always forgot to send them.
- It did help me in a positive way.
- It was nice to have the follow-up if the answer was incorrect.
- Good source of reminder.
- Last minute refresher on the subject
- It actually made me look into the book to read the material and understand it more.
- Useful for developing understanding
- I'd rather have problems like these in class than by emails.
- Giving us feedback helped, so I could use that knowledge for the test.

Describe your evaluation methods.

I first did the project in the Spring 2006 semester. I have improved the process by making the following changes for the Fall 06 semester:

1. The weekly emails are now embedded in MyMathLab (see below)
2. The weekly emails are now graded on a 0 to 3 points scale: 0 if not answered, 1 if most of the work is wrong, 2 if most of the work is correct and 3 if the answer is totally correct.
3. I am currently answering back regardless if the answer is right or wrong. That allows me the possibility to correct mistake as well as encouraging good students.
4. It took me a few hours at the beginning of the semester to set everything up in MML. Every week, I set aside about one hour to answer my Weekly Emails.

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COURSES > 06 FALL - MTH 098-025 > WEEKLY EMAILS

Information about the weekly emails
 A weekly email assessment question will be sent to you. You will have to answer these conceptual questions to the best of your ability via email according to the deadline.
 Late emails will not be accepted. Each email is worth 3 points: 0 point if you don't answer; 1 point if your answer is mainly wrong; 2 points if your answer is partially right; 3 points if your answer is 100% right.
 These weekly questions will be worth 5% of your final grade.

- Weekly Email #9 - Due Friday 11/03/06**
- Weekly Email #8 - Due Friday 10/27/06**
- Weekly Email #7 - Due Friday 10/20/06**

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Weekly Email #8 DUE FRIDAY 11/03/06 by MIDNIGHT x 15 When yabik asked the simplify (factor) of $(x+2)(x+3)$ she calculated the 5c in $(x+2)(x+3)$ as $2 \times 3 = 6$. Tell her what's wrong and why. Write "Email #8" in the subject line. Make sure to sign your full name. CLICK HERE TO ANSWER Click on the above link to answer Weekly Email #8	Weekly Email #9 DUE FRIDAY 11/03/06 by MIDNIGHT Julia asks to write the sum of the squares of the last number with the 0 in the base of the number. Tell her what's wrong and why. Write "Email #9" in the subject line. Make sure to sign your full name. CLICK HERE TO ANSWER Click on the above link to answer Weekly Email #9
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COURSES > 06 FALL - MTH 098-025 > WEEKLY EMAILS > WEEKLY EMAIL #5 - DUE FRIDAY 10/06/06

Weekly Email #5
 DUE FRIDAY 10/06/06 BY MIDNIGHT

Your best friend tells you that $(x+2)(x+3) = x^2 + 6$. (read x squared + 6...sorry MML email system doesn't allow me to write exponent properly). Tell her if she's right or wrong and explain to her in details how to multiply these 2 binomials.

Write "Email #5" in the subject line.
 Make sure to sign your full name.

Correct Answer to Email #5
 She is incorrect.

In order to solve this problem, one would use the FOIL method.

F = First with First --> x times x = x squared
 O = Outer product --> x times 3 = 3x
 I = Inner product --> 2 times x = 2x
 L = Last with last --> 2 times 3 = 6.

Then add all terms and combine like terms.
 The final answer is x squared + 5x + 6