It's a Wrap: Using ClassWrappers to Promote Student Success

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Author Biography

Sandra Anderson is an associate professor of mathematics at Georgia Highlands College. She primarily teaches Quantitative Skills and Reasoning and Elementary Statistics. In addition, she teaches University System of Georgia's online core curriculum courses for eCore. She currently serves as a High Impact Practices Implementation Leader and a Chancellor's Learning Scholar for the USG. In addition, she serves as chair of GHC's Gateway to Completion mathematics effort.

Introduction

What if I told you that by using one simple tool in your classroom you could very likely increase your students' life skills of attendance, organization, communication, studying, and self-reflection leading to their own self-evaluation? In addition, you as an instructor would have a method that easily enables you to make early and frequent feedback available to your students. You would also be provided a convenient way to utilize closure, scaffolding, and promotion of student engagement during your lessons. Would you be interested in learning more?

Description

The use of ClassWrappers is an active learning strategy formatted to allow students the opportunity to self-reflect on individual class sessions. Following classroom instruction, students utilize ClassWrappers to work in groups to solve problems and apply concepts in order to identify their perceived strengths and weaknesses over the covered material. These ClassWrappers have been piloted across many foundation-level gateway math courses. Feedback from students and instructors, as well as statistics gathered, indicate this strategy has been beneficial.

Use and Benefits for Students

When students are acquiring new skills, real-time checks for comprehension can prevent students from forming misconceptions or developing incorrect practices. The immediate feedback afforded using this ClassWrapper strategy can make it easier for students to analyze their understanding (or misunderstanding) of the material while providing a way to self-assess mastery of course content. Students benefit from taking responsibilty for their own learning metacognitively, as well as solidifying key points that are a basis for what will be included on assessments.

Use of this ClassWrapper technique can also benefit students outside the classroom with its emphasis on organization, study skills, attendance, communication, and relationships. To encourage organizational skills, students can be required to keep a notebook of ClassWrappers that may be utilized as a guided review for tests. Students that do not or cannot complete the concepts presented during the class "wrap" -up time can benefit from referral for help outside of class time with the instructor or the school's tutorial services. ClassWrappers are designed to be efficiently utilized in groups during class, creating student interaction with fellow classmates and the instructor. This practice can also lead to the formation of student study groups. Personal interaction and group work/study have been shown to increase student retention. Additionally, some instructors have utilized the ClassWrappers for attendance purposes as a "ticket" out of the classroom.

Value and Use for Instructors

The use of "wrap"-up sessions for instructors can prove to be invaluable. ClassWrappers can be used by the classroom instructor for review for tests as well as bonus points, classroom attendance, and participation grades. Use of this structure can guide an instructor's focus and efficiency, while breaking up teaching time into segments and actively engaging students in the learning process. Furthermore, ClassWrappers can be applied as a form of scaffolding, to review a previous lesson before introducing new concepts.

Utilization of ClassWrappers prompts instructors to use proactive and regular feedback, as well as descriptive feedback for struggling students for the purpose of immediately improving and understanding specific skills. This facilitation of formative feedback is provided when it can still help make a difference—before students leave the classroom and struggle with concepts. ClassWrappers also aid in closure, helping students better organize current information into meaningful context before the end of a class period.

CLASS WRAPPER 6.1 Algebraic Expressions **Date:**

Name: _____

1. Simplify 5(2x – 3).

2. Simplify 3(4y-5) – (7y-2).

Source: USA Today

3. The data in the above graph can be modeled by the formula, $D=0.005x^2+0.55x+34$, where D is the national diversity index in the United States x years after 1980.
   a. According to the formula, what was the U.S. diversity index in 2010?

   b. How does this compare with the index displayed by the bar graph?

Figure 1: Example of a ClassWrapper

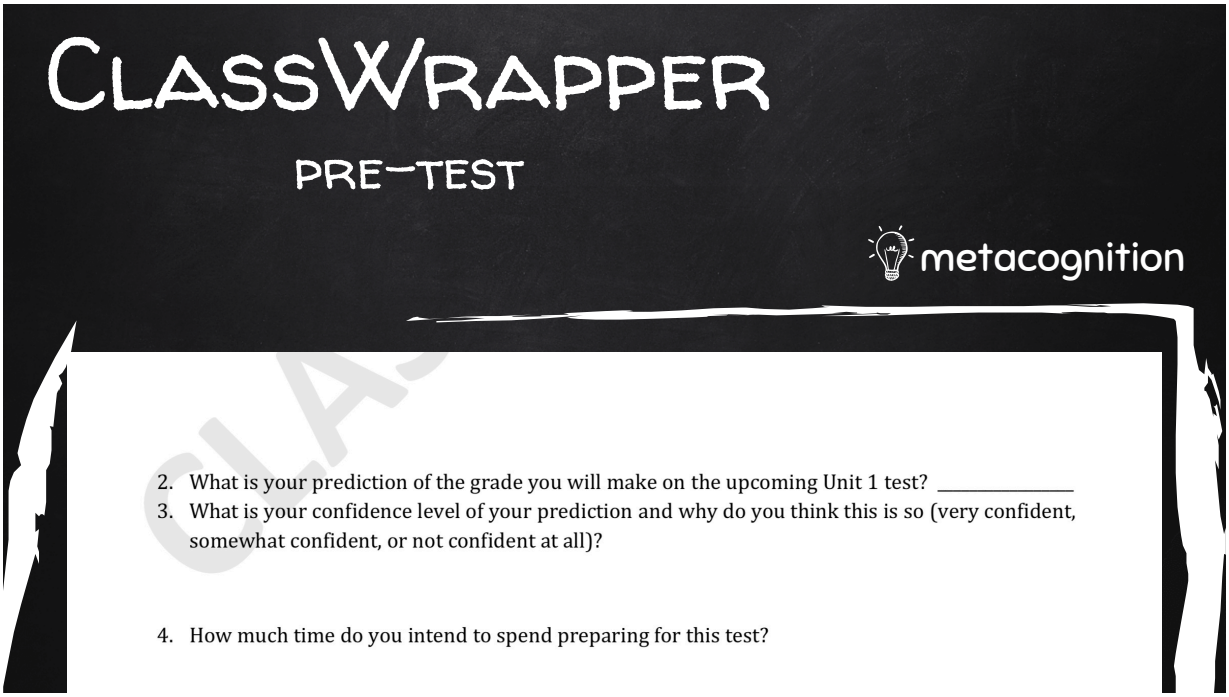

Figure 2: Example of a Pre-test ClassWrapper

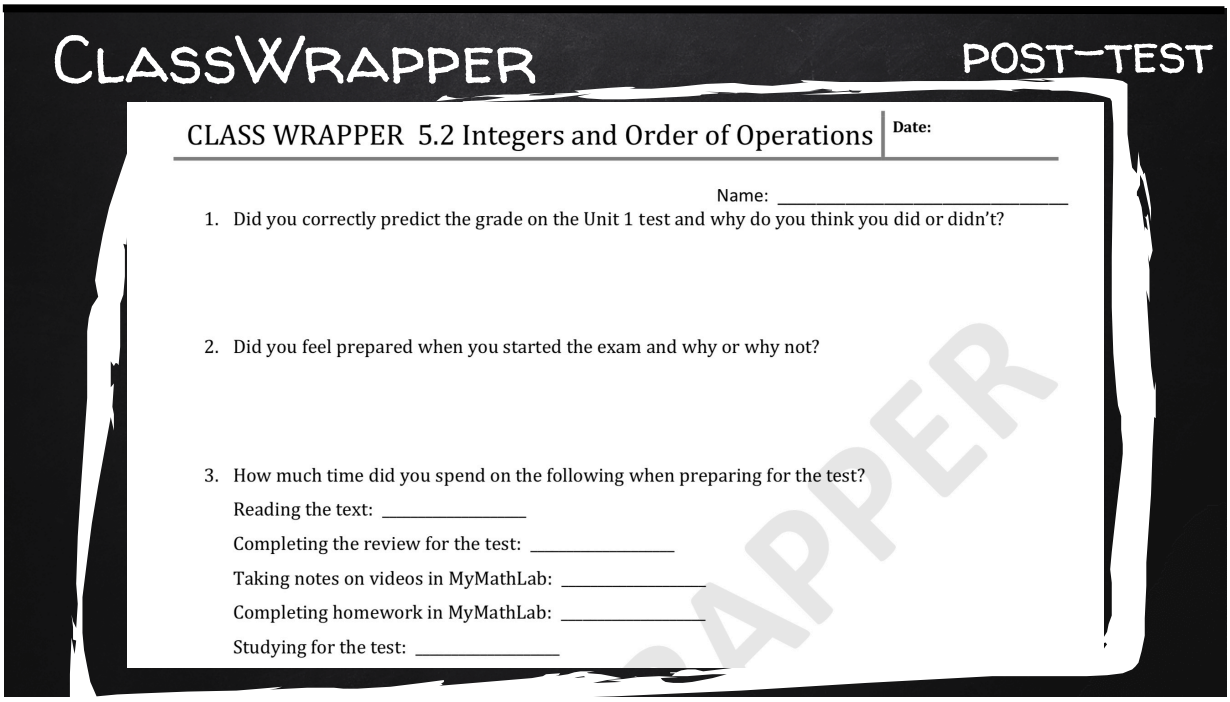

Figure 3: Example of a Post-test ClassWrapper

Student Feedback

The following are examples of student feedback given about ClassWrappers.

> *The ClassWrappers help me understand if I really got all the information given.*
>
> *When we do ClassWrappers, I can ask my classmates how they understood to do the problem and it helps me clear up my misunderstandings.*
>
> *I don't like to ask questions out loud in class. During the ClassWrappers, I can ask a classmate or I can ask my teacher one on one.*

Instructor Feedback

The following are examples of instructor feedback given about ClassWrappers.

> *I had students that I had to 'kick out' of the classroom to finish our discussion to allow the waiting class into the room. I told one student not to worry that we would discuss the questions later, but she said 'No, it's personal, I want to get this before I leave.'*
>
> *100% of my students turned in their ClassWrappers for Test 1. The ClassWrappers sum up the material perfectly; a great way to end the class.*
>
> *The ClassWrappers help myself and my students stay on track and they pull together everything we covered in a nice little 'wrapper.'*

Conclusion

In conclusion, this ClassWrapper initiative has been used to foster improvement for teaching and learning in foundation level college courses. Feedback from students and instructors, as well as statistics gathered, indicate this strategy has been beneficial. In particular, this process helped increase student success in high-enrollment courses as measured by grades and retention rates. The experience also furthered an understanding of the importance of improved learning and success in foundation-level gateway courses. In what ways might you and your students benefit from the use of this tool in your classroom?