

Homework Time Upgrade

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Context: In-class; JAVA Programming

Keywords: homework, study skills

Student Activity Time: 5-10 minutes

After submitting a homework assignment, students responded to a brief survey about what they did to complete the assignment.

Introducing the Reflection Activity

Throughout the term, students tend to lose focus when it comes to implementing good habits. This can be especially true when they start comparing their performance to others. An educator implemented a homework reflection activity with the aim to make visible and remind students of the invisible work of being a successful student. The purpose of this activity was to prompt students to reflect on their homework and learning process in an effort to re-implement and sustain good habits.

After students submitted the weekly homework assignment, the educator gave students a brief, anonymous survey about the assignment using Google Drive. The questions included:

1. How much focused time did you spend on this homework assignment?
2. How many days before the homework was due did you start?
3. What do you really comprehend?
4. What are you still learning?
5. How did you solve your problems?
6. How well does this homework assignment reflect your abilities on this topic?

The survey also included a few yes or no questions about homework and studying such as: visiting the tutoring center, office hours, studying in a group, note taking, and reading the textbook. The educator did not give a grade for completing these surveys, but in the next class period, the educator shared the results with the class using a Google Drive summary, and discussed some of the themes across all of the student responses.

After completing the reflection activity, students increased their use of office hours, and the tutoring center. Throughout the term, students also increased their lead time to begin assignments, and a normalized distribution of time spent on the homework was achieved.

Description	
1	Accept students' homework assignments.
2	Distribute homework survey link to students via Canvas to the Google Drive form.
3	Prepare a Google Drive Summary Of Responses with charts showing students' responses to share back with them.
4	Review the student survey responses in the next class and share themes with the class.

In the words of the Educator: Tips and Inspiration

Use this to point students to resources and habits that help. I picked the survey questions because there are some things we know help students to be successful. This activity reminds students of these strategies. After I do this activity, students increase their use of the tutoring center and my office hours. The trend throughout the term is for students to spend more time focused on their homework. Interestingly enough, just asking them how early they start their homework assignment motivates them to start earlier on each assignment as the term progresses. It was a pleasant surprise.

Help your students feel heard. The survey takes a short amount of time, and can be completed while homework is being collected. After completion, it is easy for the teacher to create the Summary of Responses charts through Google Drive, along with reading the “comprehension” and “still learning” responses. It is very important that the responses are shared with the students in the next day or two as it reaffirms the teacher’s commitment to keeping a dialogue going in regards to teaching and learning. It also helps the teacher know what material may need a review or more practice.

What was the inspiration for the reflection activity? In the past, I have sent weekly study tips on reading and retention of the material to my students. I want them to improve their reading skills and habits. Two things motivated me to create this activity. One, I wanted feedback on weekly homework assignment approaches and how that evolved throughout the term. Second, I wanted to teach students how to learn by offering them a weekly reminder in the homework survey; they could spend time reading, taking notes, reviewing notes, reviewing previous tests, working with a study group, using the tutoring center and my office hours--tips we encourage students to develop into habits. Sometimes students get discouraged when they compare themselves to other students in the course - without realizing how much other students are doing to be successful. This activity brings to light the unseen, out-of-class parts of being a successful student and shares it with everyone as a motivational tool.