

Practice Makes Perfect: Clickers as a Tool for Student Writing and Feedback

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The development of strong writing skills requires repeated cycles of practice and feedback. Due to time and resource constraints of large classes, the feedback piece is often most difficult to achieve. One general approach for providing feedback to students in these settings is peer instruction, using a personal response system (such as iClicker). This tool improves student engagement in large classes by allowing all students to attempt answers, and giving feedback to the room about student knowledge. However, clicker problems are limited to multiple choice questions, which are a challenging format for developing higher order thinking skills such as synthesis and evaluation of written work. Here, I discuss how clickers may be combined with open-ended questions, by providing students with practice and evaluation of their own writing. In this strategy, the question posed in class requires a written explanation or a diagram to illustrate a concept, and representative student answers are selected while circulating the class. Students vote on what they perceive to be the best answers, prompting a discussion about best practices in communication. Instructor feedback is centered around evaluation of the written statement, prompting students to improve their own writing. In this workshop, participants will design and evaluate this type of question, discuss logistical classroom approaches, and practice facilitating feedback to best support student learning.

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