

Teaching Remedial Mathematics for Conceptual Understanding: Student Response

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Abstract

This paper describes student response, as indicated by an anonymous questionnaire, given by the author to her remedial algebra students at a community college that is part of a large East Coast open-admissions university. The course in question is aimed at the university-wide exit mathematics test necessary to graduation and college-level coursework. The author's approach is to teach for understanding, with the goal of promoting long-term retention rather than short-term rule memorization. Of the 30 active students (those still enrolled after the date to withdraw without penalty), 19 (or close to two thirds of those students) responded to the questionnaire. With a few exceptions, their responses suggest that teaching remedial mathematics for understanding by showing the sense behind the rules facilitates both comprehension and appreciation for the subject in this difficult course.