

Less is More: Increasing Class Time and Reducing Homework

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Indiana University Southeast recognized the low rate of student success in lower-level mathematics courses that feed into all majors of the university. When a student fails one of these courses, they are more likely to drop out of college. Lower-level mathematics courses (mostly one hundred level) added 45 minutes to classes that normally met twice a week for 1 hour and 15 minutes. Supplemental instructors (peer tutors) were also added. Students worked on problems in groups with support from the instructor and the supplemental instructor. The amount of homework was reduced by at least 50% due to the extra class time and problems solved by students in class. Courses that followed this program experienced a significant increase in the number of students passing the mathematics class. The program has expanded through the mathematics department and been shared with other Indiana University Campuses through its Summer Academy for Curriculum Analysis and Improvement. The model is easily replicated and is being considered in chemistry classes.

Keywords: student success, introductory mathematics courses, alternative model, peer tutoring



Mildred A. Vernia, teaching professor of mathematics at Indiana University Southeast, earned her MBA with a concentration in numerical analysis from Bellarmine University, Kentucky. Prior to that, she earned her BA in Statistics from Indiana University. In her 34 years of teaching, she has been a pioneer in using active learning methods in mathematics and has created a safe classroom environment to help students overcome their fear of mathematics. She is the 2019 Distinguished Teaching Award winner for full time faculty and has been awarded the Trustees Teaching Award in 1996, 2018, 2020, and 2023.