

Clickers in the Biology Lab: A Tool Used for More than Just Taking Attendance

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The University of Houston has a very large freshman student population and in order to meet the demand, we currently run 44 sections of Introductory Biology labs each semester. For the past two years we have been using clickers to assess students' preparedness by running a quiz at the beginning of most labs. Our lab (clicker) quizzes are designed to test students on knowledge based in the prior lab (75%) and on their reading for the lab to be covered that day (25%). Clickers are used in the lecture hall portion of the Introductory Biology course as a way to increase the interaction among students and between students and the Professor. They are a great tool to take attendance in big 200 – 500 student classes, as well as a good method to assess the understanding of concepts. The use of clickers has resulted a very effective and quick way to measure student performance in these courses. We are currently working on introducing activities that include the use of clickers, such as case studies, as part of a laboratory exercise. The participants for this mini-workshop will have an opportunity to practice using clickers as the students do in class. Examples of creative use of clickers will be provided with the participants playing the role of student. Participants will also have the opportunity to experiment with the software interface to learn how clicker questions are built right into a PowerPoint slide show and how to manage the data on the backend of the process.

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