

Lab Notebooks vs. Lab Discussions: Let's Talk About That

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Over the course of a semester, lab notebook writing and grading can become overwhelming. In an effort to lighten the load on both students and faculty, I announced that one lab notebook grade would be earned by participation in an in-class discussion. Students knew they would need to share their individual hypothesis from the lab we had completed and that they would need to actively contribute to the discussion to earn full points during the discussion. Students participated enthusiastically and the group discussion about the experiment got to a deeper level of understanding than that of a typical lab notebook entry. Concerns about uneven student preparedness and comprehension remain, but the discussion provided an additional benefit of building community in the class. The technique worked well in a fairly low enrollment upper-level Cell Biology course, but organized small groups having discussions and reporting back to the larger class could also be used.

Keywords: lab discussions, lab notebooks

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