

Clickers in the Classroom and Beyond: Using Personal Response Systems to Improve Student Learning

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Objective: Describe the positive impact of using clickers (personal response systems) to enhance active learning in in-curriculum teaching and staff development.

Methods: The University of Washington Health Sciences Libraries (HSL), which serves six health sciences schools, is constantly searching for new ways to use innovative technology to enhance student learning. We received a grant and purchased 50 clickers which allow instantaneous interactions between the instructor and students. The clickers (handheld transmitters) are used by the students to send an answer or vote, the receiver transfers responses to the instructor's computer, and software on the instructor's laptop tabulates responses instantaneously in graph format. Library Liaisons were taught how to incorporate clickers into class presentations. Clickers have been incorporated into in-curriculum nursing classes where we have conducted pre and post tests to assess student knowledge, guest lectures in the Information School to engage students in lecture content, and pre-op library sessions for surgery residents to assess their searching skill levels. Clickers are also used out of the library, wherever we can tote our laptops to teach. In addition to in-curriculum presentations, the clicker system can be used for library staff development/education.

Results: Clickers have provided real-time assessment for instructors on student knowledge and progress as well as instant feedback for students. Clickers have successfully encouraged active engagement, attentiveness, and class participation in class content and provided information for the content of future classes. To build on this success, the HSL has purchased an additional 25 clickers for use in larger classes.

Conclusions: Challenges for librarians in using personal response systems are: developing appropriate, thoughtful questions that allow students to apply their recently acquired knowledge; increasing instructor flexibility in teaching style; gaining familiarity with the software and equipment; and creating documentation to promote ease of use and consistency of practice.

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The Turning Point audience response system was purchased through Turning Technologies:
turningtechnologies.com*