Supplemental Instruction For Developmental Mathematics:

Early Results

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Abstract
Supplemental instruction—using trained peer tutors to conduct additional class sessions in a group-work format—has been in use for forty years. However, its success in developmental mathematics has been inconclusive. This article presents the results of a paired-section pilot study ($n = 14$ sections comprising 399 students) conducted at Hostos Community College in Spring 2013 in the College’s two developmental mathematics courses, Basic Math Skills and Elementary Algebra.

Using the same instructor for each pair of sections, the research substituted the SI methodology for the weekly tutor-led Math Lab class, with an additional voluntary weekly session. Early results showed notable improvement in course retention for both courses and in the Basic Math Skills pass rate. While the SI cohort showed no increased academic performance in Elementary Algebra, increased retention negatively impacted such performance through the inclusion of weaker students. A comparison of absolute performance (retention x passing rate) showed an increase in performance, with a higher maximum absolute pass rate for Basic Math Skills.

SI for the College’s developmental students is being expanded. The pilot suggests that increased experience and size will produce more robust results. Additional quantitative and qualitative research will be the subject of additional reports.

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