

School Name Fresno City College, Fresno, CA; College of the Sequoias, Visalia, CA

Course Name Introduction to Sociology

Course Format Face-to-face

Key Results After the implementation of REVEL students came to class better prepared. Students lacking strong study skills benefited most and scored significantly higher on exams than students in the same course the previous year. The correlation between overall REVEL scores and final course grades was strong.

Submitted by
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Course materials
REVEL for *Essentials of Sociology* by Henslin

Setting

With more than 2.1 million students on 112 campuses, the California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the United States. College of the Sequoias and Fresno City College are two schools included in the system and are both centrally located within the state of California. Demographically similar, over 50 percent of students are of Hispanic background at both schools. Students attending College of the Sequoias are often right out of high school while students attending Fresno City College tend to be slightly older, non-traditional students. The Introduction to Sociology course at both schools focuses on the study of people in society—our behavior, interactions, customs, norms, values, cultures, and institutions. Students study topics stemming from everyday life and learn to view these topics through a critical sociological lens.

Challenges and Goals

I've been teaching the Introduction to Sociology course for many years. In general, I follow the same syllabus when teaching at College of the Sequoias and Fresno City College. While there are many similarities between the two groups, I find that students at College of the Sequoias perform well in this course while Fresno City College students, being more non-traditional in age, tend to lack strong study skills, often resulting in lower exam scores. I curve my exams to help students pass the class, more for Fresno City College (FCC) than at College of the Sequoias. Without the curve, too many students at FCC would fail. I knew students weren't reading their textbook, which is essential for passing exams and the course. I decided to implement REVEL as a way to require students to read and reflect on

their assigned reading. My goal was to see an increase in exam scores, allowing me to stop curving exams altogether.

Implementation

At both College of the Sequoias and Fresno City College, I cover nine chapters throughout the semester. Being able to break this down into 21 smaller REVEL reading assignments helps students, especially those lacking strong study skills, keep up with the reading throughout the course. Quizzes embedded within the REVEL readings are worth 10 percent of a student's overall course grade. The quizzes hold students accountable and provide valuable feedback about how well they understand the material. All REVEL assignments are due by 9 a.m. on the day we address the topic in class. Because students are now reading the material, they respond to my questions more readily and ask more in-depth questions during class. As a result of this increased participation and engagement, students develop a deeper understanding of the material, allowing us to apply sociological concepts to everyday life.

Benefits observed

- Students complete reading assignments and come to class better prepared.
- Student participation and engagement in class has increased.
- Students perform better on exams.

Assessments

25 percent	Group Research Project
30 percent	Exams (3 out of 4)
20 percent	Essays (2)
15 percent	Class Participation
10 percent	REVEL (9 chapters; 21 assignments)

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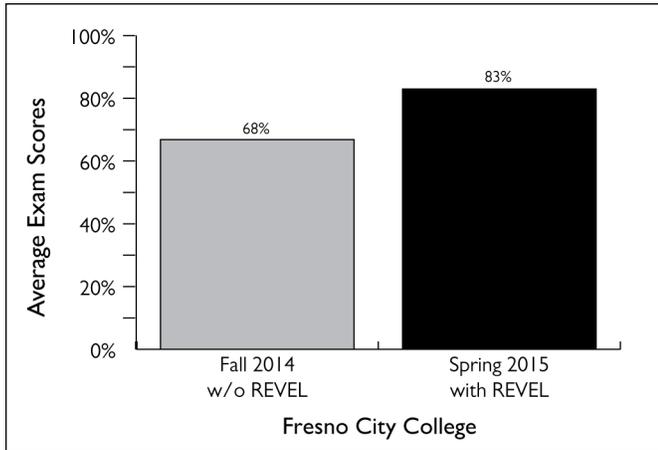


Figure 1. Average Exam Scores With vs. Without REVEL at Fresno City College (Fall 2014, n=70; Spring 2015, n=71)

(M=83%, SD=14%, N=70) scored significantly higher on exams than students in the same course the previous semester who used a print version of the textbook (M=68%, SD=16%, N=71), $t(139)=-5.83, p<.01$ (Figure 1). In addition, after outliers were removed overall REVEL scores strongly correlated with final course grades (Figure 2).

At College of the Sequoias, students continued to perform relatively well, averaging 78 percent on their exams in spring 2015 compared to 75 percent in fall 2014. As was the case with Fresno City College, overall REVEL scores strongly correlated with final course grades (Figure 3).

For both schools, students could skip one of the first three exams if they took the optional exam four. For the purposes of this study, the average of each students' highest three exam scores was calculated for each semester. The same topics were covered each semester with exam questions pulled from the publisher-provided test bank.

Results and Data

The data indicate a strong correlation between overall REVEL scores and final course grades at both Fresno City College and College of the Sequoias.

I was very pleased to see that REVEL had the greatest impact on student exam scores at Fresno City College, as these students tend to lack strong study skills and need the additional support. At Fresno City College, students using REVEL

The Student Experience

Students were given the opportunity to provide feedback on REVEL at the end of the semester. One student indicated that REVEL made it easier to access the required reading and that the greatest benefit was that REVEL provided “an easier way to

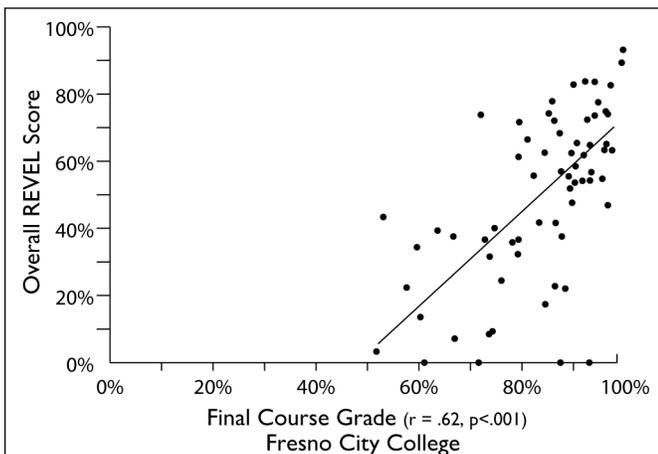


Figure 2. Correlation Between Overall REVEL Score and Final Course Grade at Fresno City College (Spring 2015, n=66)

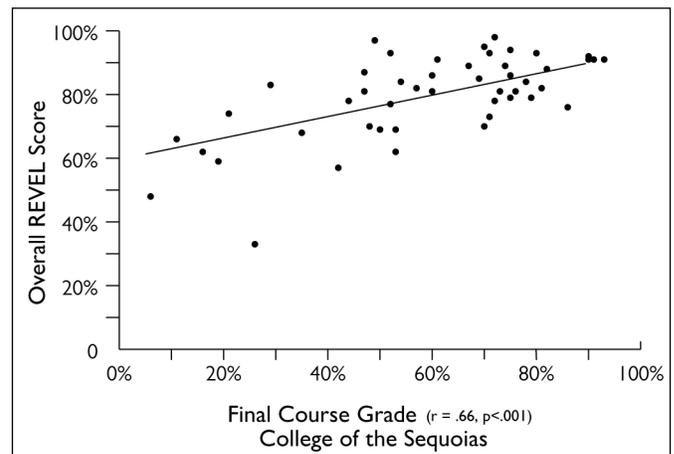


Figure 3. Correlation Between Overall REVEL Score and Final Course Grade at College of the Sequoias (Spring 2015, n=49)

remember things". This feedback is supported by the enhanced performance of students this semester compared to last semester.

Some students would have preferred not to use REVEL because of the time it takes to complete the required reading assignments. I believe that forcing students to think and reflect on their reading can only benefit them in the end. I encourage students to focus less on their individual REVEL assignment scores and more on their learning. Students can make the greatest impact on their scores by spending time completing assignments and re-reading particular sections if needed. If I see that a student is putting time and effort into their REVEL assignments, I am more than willing to adjust their REVEL score accordingly at the end of the semester.

Conclusion

I could tell that REVEL was making a difference by the increased participation and engagement in class and am very pleased to see this backed up with data. Students at Fresno City College who often lack strong study skills benefited most and scored significantly higher on exams than similar students the previous year. I want students to be able to pass their exams without a curve. With REVEL, I think they can.

I currently require two critical thinking essays that ask students to identify, define, apply, and evaluate key concepts presented in their reading and/or in lecture. To provide additional opportunities for students to practice writing and develop their critical thinking skills, I may consider incorporating short reaction papers in the form of REVEL essay assignments next semester.

References

<http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/collegeDetails.aspx?collegeID=561&txt=College%20of%20the%20Sequoias>