

Iowa State University
Dean of Students Office
Supplemental Instruction-Academic Success Center

**Supplemental Instruction Pre- and Post-Midterm:
Does *When You Attend* Make a Difference?
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Abstract

Supplemental Instruction (SI) Leaders facilitate three to five hours of sessions per week, from the second week of the semester through dead week (fifteen weeks total). Academic rigor and demands vary considerably throughout the semester, which led us to explore whether *when* a student participates in SI sessions makes a difference. This assessment shows that participation in SI sessions before and after midterm correlates positively to students' final grades. Implications of this report impact promotions and data collection processes.

Executive Summary

Purpose

The purpose of this assessment is to determine whether *when* students participate in SI impacts their final grade.

Methodology

Students' participation in SI sessions is tracked through attendance sheets by the SI Leaders at each session. Attendance is entered in the SI database as an attendance count, but it does not track when a student attended. We create monthly and midterm reports for SI, which allow us to track students' SI participation based on time periods.

In a separate assessment using the 2008-2009 dataset for all courses, we showed that there is a small, positive correlation ($r=.152$, $n=7147$, $p<.001$) between students total attendance in SI sessions and their final grade. This led us to consider how students' final grades may be affected by SI participation before and after midterms were reported.

Findings

Nearly identical small, positive correlations were discovered between SI participants' final grades and their total attendance pre-midterm ($r=.123$, $n=3106$, $p<.001$) and post-midterm ($r=.126$, $n=3106$, $p<.001$). There were 3202 SI participants during the spring semester. Of these 3202¹:

- ◆ 1403 participated in SI both pre- and post-midterm.
- ◆ 1072 participated in SI sessions occurring only pre-midterm.
- ◆ 729 participated in SI sessions occurring only post-midterm.

There is no statistically significant correlation between final grade and SI participation for the SI participants only attending SI sessions occurring prior to midterm. Similarly, there is no statistically significant correlation between final grade and SI participation for the SI participants only attending SI sessions occurring after midterm.

Hence, from this report, *when* a student attends SI sessions seems to make a difference in final grade only if the student attends SI sessions occurring prior to and after midterms.

Discussion and Recommendations

Although the correlations are not strong, the primary implication of this report is in our promotions – we need to encourage students to participate in SI sessions throughout the semester. We should place greater emphasis on our efforts to encourage students to make SI participation a frequent component of their study schedule.

¹ Note that 96 SI participants are excluded since they withdrew from the course. Withdrawals cannot be calculated in correlations.

Clearly, since our data tracking system loses the date which a student participated in an SI session, this report has strong limitations. For future assessment, if knowing *when* a student attends SI matters, then we need to modify our SI tracking to include the date which a session occurred. This tracking is not possible within the framework of data collection that we have established, but it is reasonable if we build this into a new data tracking system. Any future changes to data tracking for SI should consider tracking *when* a student participated in a session.