Using Clickers to Review Prerequisite Material and Reading Assignments

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It is almost a universal complaint among mathematics faculty that students in an advanced class have an inadequate understanding of material that was covered in a prerequisite course. In this discussion, we will describe how individual response systems (clickers) were used in a differential equations class (1) to test students’ recall of required material from calculus, and (2) to encourage discussion among students about concepts in calculus. The activity took from five to ten minutes at the beginning of each 75-minute class. We will discuss student reactions to this activity and its affect on the conduct of the class as a whole. We will discuss a similar activity in a discrete mathematics class in which clickers were used to test students’ understanding of assigned reading and to encourage discussions of questions students raised. Our presentation will include a demonstration using the clickers and a sampling of the questions used to stimulate thinking and encourage discussion.