



The Use of Self-Assessments to Increase Student Success in Test Taking

Susan Priest

College Success Instructor, WNCC

February 9, 2007

***Acknowledgements:** Steve Carman, PhD; John Kinkella, Dean of Student Services; Cheryl Pawluk, PhD; Robert F. Priest, PhD; WNCC Students*



Goals for Today

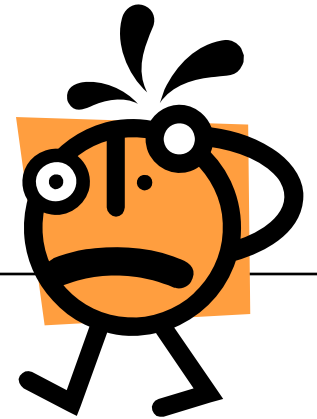
1. Provide an overview of the test anxiety assessment projects at WNCC.
2. Identify the uses and limitations of a **quantitative** self-assessment (*LASSI*) and three types of **qualitative** self-assessments used in a college success class.
3. Explore other uses for self-assessments.



Background to Project

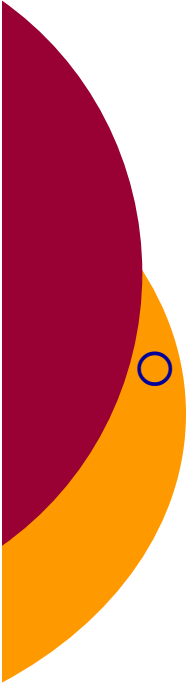
Metacognition & Mindfulness

Background – Fall 2005



Test Anxiety Workshops (WNCC)

- ½-credit Workshops offered at 3 campuses
- Students introduced to key study strategies related to test taking
- Primary focus of workshop was identifying “body talk” and “self talk.”
- Anecdotal evidence -- students reported greater success when they did 2 things:
 1. Became aware of their negative cognitions and replaced their “old” thoughts with new thoughts.
 2. Practiced breathing and stress reduction techniques before and during exams.



Background – Spring 2006

Fear Factor ~ Mindfulness with John Kinkella, Dean of Student Services

- 15 minute presentation at the beginning of the semester in all science classes taught by Steve Carman, PhD.
 1. Breathing Techniques
 2. Noticing your thoughts -- “Drunken Monkeys”
- Students given an assessment after presentation.
- Students contacted by e-mail around week 6 of the semester (after the first exam) to see if they had tried either of the techniques.



Current Test Anxiety Self-Assessment Project

The philosophy behind quieting the “drunken monkeys.”



Fall 2006 – College Success Classes

- **Ongoing project with Cheryl Pawluk, PhD** -- PSYCH 101 and CAPS 122 students given LASSI, PEEK and EQI (2006-2007)
- **Student Success Classes – 103 students, enrolled in:**
 - 2 - 1-credit short term classes before semester began and mid-semester
 - 4 – 3-credit classes that ran for the full semester
- **“It’s all in the mind”** – George Harrison, *Yellow Submarine*



Major Goal: Lower “Affective” Barriers of Incoming Students

“Education is about relationships.”

--J. D. Krishnamurti

- Promote active learning through small group work in-class.
- Instructor learns all students names within first 2 weeks.
- Instructor calls on individual students by name in class.
- Instructor meets with all students in one-on-one sessions during the semester (20-30 minutes long.)
 - 1-credit classes – 1 session
 - 3-credit classes – 2 sessions



Quantitative Self-Assessment

*LASSI: Learning and Study
Strategies Inventory*



LASSI: Learning and Study Strategies Inventory

- **Authors:** Claire E. Weinstein, PhD, David R. Palmer, PhD and Ann C. Shulte, PhD
- **History:** “Nine years of research, development, and testing led to this statistically valid and reliable tool for the diagnosis of study skills.”
(<http://www.hhpublishing.com/assessments/LASSI/index.html>)
- **Form and Purpose:**
 - 10-scale, 80-item assessment
 - Related to skill, will and self-regulation components of student learning
 - Diagnostic
 - Prescriptive



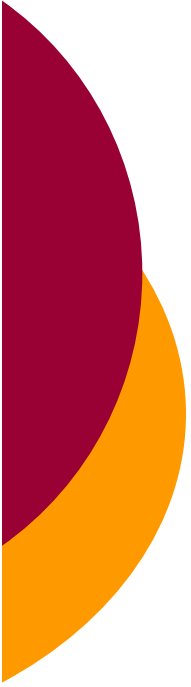
LASSI – 10 Scales

- ANX – anxiety and worry about school performance
- ATT – attitude and interest
- CON – concentration and attention to academic tasks
- INP – information processing, acquiring knowledge, and reasoning
- MOT – motivation, diligence, self-discipline and willingness to work hard
- SFT – self-testing, reviewing, and preparing for classes
- SMI – selecting main ideas and recognizing important information
- STA – use of support techniques and materials
- TMT – use of time management principles for academic tasks
- TST – test strategies and preparing for tests



LASSI – *Diagnostic Tool*

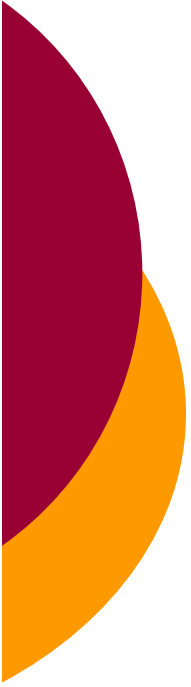
- ***LASSI*** given in class to College Success students:
 - 1-credit classes on First Day
 - 3-credit classes during Week 1
- 92 students took ***LASSI*** (ages 14 – 60)
- Results discussed in class immediately after being administered
- Students wrote an essay on what they learned from ***LASSI*** and other “inventories”
- ***LASSI*** results reviewed with instructor during first semester meeting, around Week 6



LASSI – Findings

GENDER DIFFERENCES

- **AGE** -- Mean difference in age ~ 6 years
 - Female = 24.1
 - Male = 18.7
- **STA** – Mean difference 3.1 points
 - Female = 24.7
 - Male = 21.6
 - Stepwise multiple regression suggests **STA** only *LASSI* score that predicts gender
 - Male students less likely to ask for help



LASSI – Findings

Withdrawal Findings

- At first glance it looked like lower **ANX** and **MOT** scores were linked to withdrawal
- Mean Difference of **MOT** ~ 2.6 points
 - Finished Course = 30.3
 - Withdrew = 27.7
- Stepwise multiple regression suggests **MOT** is the single *LASSI* score that is linked to withdrawal
- Students who are not motivated to work hard are more likely to drop the course



LASSI – Uses & Limitations

○ Uses

- Diagnostic tool for students to identify their strengths and weaknesses study skills and attitudes
- **Other –**

○ Limitations

- Can increase student anxiety and feelings of not belonging in college
- **Other --**



Qualitative Self-Assessments

*Mapping students' stories about
their test taking experiences*



Introducing the Topic of Thoughts during an exam

What goes through your mind when the first person leaves the exam room?

- "Sucker."
- "What did she know that I didn't?"
- "Why am I so slow?"
- "I'm always last."
- "I didn't study enough."
- "A#\$%&*"

"Hell is other people." *Jean Paul Sartre*



Introducing the Topic of Anxiety -- Body Talk and Self Talk

○ **BODY TALK –**

- Problem: The sensations in our body that are “red flags” for feeling anxious
- Examples: Sweaty palms, headache, dizziness, nausea
- Solution: Breathing, progressive relaxation and other stress reduction techniques

○ **SELF TALK**

- Problem: Negative cognitions can become roadblocks for students during exam
- Examples: “I always fail tests.”
- Solution: Notice that you are having negative thoughts and replace them with positive thoughts



Qualitative Self-Assessments

Three Types -- FALL 2006

1. Essays where students assess their own
 - Practice of breathing and stress – reduction techniques
 - Use of thought monitoring techniques before, during and after a major exam
 - Performance during a major exam (from any class)
2. Final self-assessments
 - What they learned about themselves this semester
 - “Top Ten List” of their favorite study skills and ideas
3. Survey given after Final Exam (*only in 3-credit version of course.*)



Self-Assessments (Type 1)

- “Before my math test I wasn’t all that worried because I felt I knew all the information...the day of my test I became a little nervous...I took a few deep breaths and started to relax...After the test I felt confident and was looking forward to see what my grade was on my test...I feel that taking the deep breaths and remaining calm is what helped me with this test.”



Self-Assessments (Type 1)

- “My thoughts before I take a test are for the most part the same before each test. The only thing I really think about is, did I study the right material, and I hope I get a good grade on it...Then when it comes to after the test I sit there and think about some of the questions I was not sure on...Sometimes I just get a brain fart and cant think of it, and when I’m done I am like oh that was the answer. Then all I keep thinking about is my grades.”



Self-Assessments (Type 2)

Mentioned Stress Reduction/Test Anxiety in Final Self-Assessments

- **43%** (*3-credit students who completed the course*) – Final self-assessment

“I learned that I have a serious test anxiety problem”

“I have been taught how to overcome my anxiety and plan to use these skills for many tests to come.”

“I learned I am an excellent test taker”

“I can't say I ace all my tests, but I don't freeze up and panic anymore.”

- **53%** (*3-credit students who completed the course*) – Top Ten List



Self Assessments – Final Survey (Type 3)

- **63 %** said they practiced breathing and stress reduction before the exam.
- **71 %** of students who had other classes with tests, said they practiced breathing and stress reduction techniques for other tests.
- Coded Thoughts Before – During and After Final Exam in College Success Report
 - Task Related – Positive, Neutral, Negative
 - Not-Task Related – Positive, Neutral, Negative



Qualitative Self-Assessments – Uses & Limitations

○ Uses

- Introduce students to “metacognitive” practices
- Increase students’ self-awareness
- Illustrate the worldview of the student for instructor
- Other --

○ Limitations

- Difficult to relate to quantitative data
- Other --