

The Midterm Wrapper: A Mid-Semester Performance Intervention for Introductory Psychology

Christie Cathey, Hayley Barry, and Lydia Needy
Missouri State University

Charlie Hoogland
University of South Florida

The Midterm Wrapper

What's a Midterm Wrapper?

- An online, self-reflection assignment modeled after the exam wrapper (Lovett, 2013).
- Rather than reflecting on performance on just one exam, students consider their performance on *all* assignments and exams from the first half of the semester, and they list their study plans for the second half of the semester.

Goal of Current Study

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the midterm wrapper as a performance intervention in large sections of *Introductory Psychology*.

Method

Participants

- 778 students enrolled in one of three sections of *Introductory Psychology* in Spring 2018 were invited to complete the Midterm Wrapper assignment. 402 completed the assignment.

Materials

- Performance Worksheet: Listed all assignments and exams, points possible for each, and blanks for students to record all earned points from the first half of the semester.
- Midterm Wrapper: Online survey that asked students to:
 - Reflect on their performance the first half of the semester.
 - Answer questions about how they prepared for exams.
 - Using a checklist of successful study strategies, indicate those they planned to use in the future.

See Fall 2019
Materials



Procedure

- After submitting midterm grades, instructors sent email inviting students to complete an optional, online assignment designed to help them improve their course performance.
- The email contained:
 - A printable performance worksheet with instructions to fill it out before completing the midterm wrapper.
 - A link to the midterm wrapper.
- Students had one week to complete the assignment.

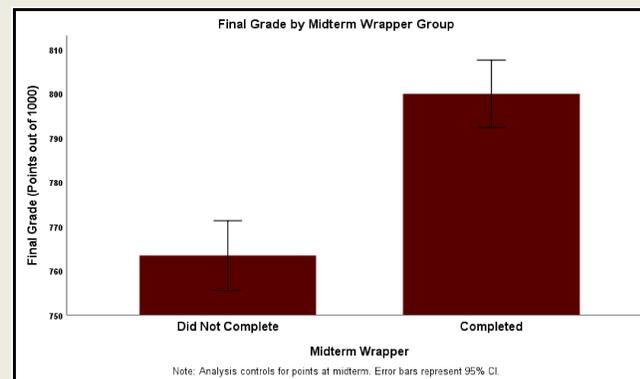
Results

Students' Perceptions of Assignment

- Immediately after completing the midterm wrapper, students rated their level of agreement with three statements about the assignment on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).
- Students agreed that as a result of the midterm wrapper...
 - they felt more confident about improving their course performance ($M = 5.75$, $SD = 1.09$, 25% strongly agreed).
 - they had a better sense of what they needed to do to improve ($M = 5.94$, $SD = 1.01$, 33% strongly agreed).
 - they were more motivated to work harder the second half of the semester ($M = 5.81$, $SD = 1.21$, 31% strongly agreed).

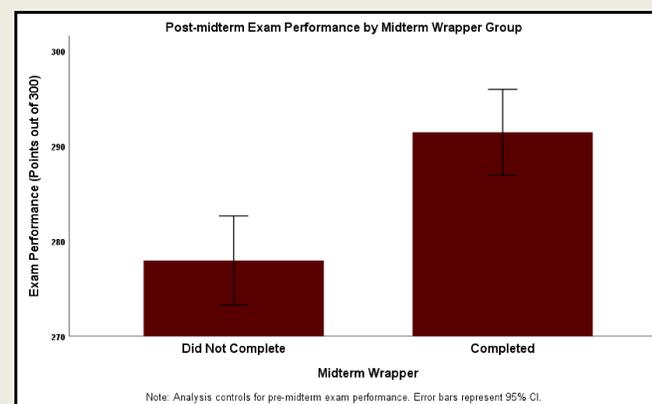
Final Grade Comparison

- Midterm wrapper participants earned significantly higher final grades than did non-midterm wrapper participants, $F(1, 772) = 41.53$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .051$, as illustrated in the figure below.



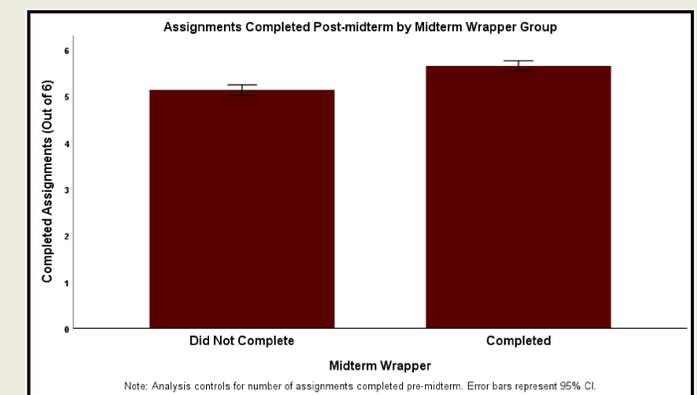
Exam Performance Comparison

- Midterm wrapper participants performed significantly better on the final 3 exams than did non-midterm wrapper participants, $F(1, 774) = 16.46$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .021$, as illustrated in the figure below.



Assignment Completion Comparison

- Midterm wrapper participants completed significantly more of the final six assignments than did non-midterm wrapper participants, $F(1, 772) = 41.61$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .051$, as illustrated in the figure below.



Discussion

Effectiveness of Midterm Wrapper

- Students who completed the midterm wrapper scored, on average, 4% points higher at the end of the semester than did those who did not complete the assignment.
- It is possible that highly motivated students were more likely to complete the assignment, and this motivation is what led to differences in performance.
- However, in all analyses, we statistically controlled for students' performance prior to midterm and still found better performance among students who completed the midterm wrapper.

Midterm Wrapper as Required Assignment

- Based on the positive outcomes of the pilot test of the midterm wrapper, we now require all students to complete the assignment.
- At the end of Fall 2019, we asked students to rate their perceptions of the midterm wrapper using the same 7-point scale described above. Even at the end of the semester, students agreed that the midterm wrapper...
 - caused them to keep better track of their grades ($M = 5.35$, $SD = 1.39$, 25% strongly agreed).
 - showed them what they needed to do to improve their performance ($M = 5.50$, $SD = 1.32$, 22% strongly agreed).
 - motivated them to work harder the second half of the semester ($M = 5.22$, $SD = 1.46$, 20% strongly agreed).
- The midterm wrapper provides much bang for your pedagogical buck. That is, this assignment takes very little time and effort on the part of the student and instructor, but it leads to impressive improvements in student performance.