

Getting Students to Read Course Material

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ABSTRACT: To successfully achieve all course outcomes by the semester's end, higher education professors expect students to bear some responsibility for their learning by reading assigned textbook chapters or articles outside of class. However, studies show that students are not reading assigned content independently. In fact, most students feel it is the professor's job to cover all the relevant content in class. Previous research has found that holding students accountable through pop quizzes, scheduled quizzes, or graded reading assignments significantly increases reading compliance. This study investigated if low-stakes, guided reading assignments would motivate business students to read the course material before class. It also assessed students' perceived value of completing the reading assignments. Using an accounting class at Point Loma Nazarene University (N=24) and a management class at Evangel University (N=38), we found that holding students accountable increased reading compliance, even with low point values. This resulted in the professors being able to use class time to expand on key concepts. In addition, we also found a significant increase in students' perceptions of the value of reading before class if the professor did not spend class time regurgitating the assigned reading material.

KEYWORDS: required reading, reading compliance, textbooks, higher education, business, accounting, management, low-stakes quizzing

INTRODUCTION

A common question students ask professors at the beginning of every semester is, "Do I really need to purchase the required materials listed in the syllabus?" As new professors, we found this question perplexing. We thought, "How could anyone expect to do well in a course if they do not read the course materials?" After teaching for a few years and having casual conversations with several students, we began to understand their mindsets. They were really asking if they would be held accountable for studying the information in the textbook and other supplementary materials on their own or if we would be covering everything they needed to know in class. If the class lectures would cover most of what they needed to know, why should they spend the money to acquire books and/or take the time to read them?

Despite our emphasis on the need for students to acquire the course materials, we still observed that several students remained unconvinced. Only when they noticed the first

reading assignment pop up on their Learning Management System (LMS) calendars would they equate reading with their grade and decide to order the course materials. We commonly observe the hold-out students scrambling to make photocopies or take pictures of the assigned reading pages from a friend's book about 24-48 hours before that first graded reading assignment is due.

Perceptions of Reading in Higher Education

A literature review reveals that our experiences are commonplace throughout higher education. Studies exploring students' perceptions of assigned reading show that most students do not feel reading is necessary to earn the desired grade. Baier et al. (2011) surveyed 395 undergraduate and graduate students at two Midwestern universities. Eighty-nine percent reported they could earn a C or better without doing any of the reading. In fact, 31% believed they could earn an A. Berry et al. (2011) found similar estimates among 264 undergraduate finance students at three universities.

Seventy-four percent thought they would earn a C or better by attending class and not reading the textbook.

More recent is research from Culver and Hutchens (2021) that compared faculty perceptions to student perceptions. They surveyed 155 undergraduate students and 210 faculty. Eighty-seven percent of the faculty reported requiring their students to purchase a textbook, and they stated that, on average, 80% of their course exams directly relied on textbook material. However, 89% of those faculty reported that students could earn a C or better in their class without reading the textbook. The students in this study reported similar statistics. Ninety-two percent stated they could earn a C or better without using the assigned textbook, and one student commented, “Most professors say that it is impossible to pass their class without the textbook; however, I am making high Bs and As in all of my courses and I rarely read the book” (Culver & Hutchins, 2021, p. 88).

Interestingly, in the previous research studies, students seemed satisfied with earning an average grade. The professors in this paper’s research encourage our students to strive for more than average grades. Striving for more than average will help them be successful in their careers, as suggested in Proverbs 22:29 (New International Version, 2011): “Do you see someone skilled in their work? They will serve before kings; they will not serve before officials of low rank.” The Bible also admonishes us to do everything with excellence as if we are working directly for the Lord: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Colossians 3:23-24).

Reading Compliance in Higher Education

Burchfield and Sappington (2000) researched student compliance with assigned reading over 16 years in the 1980s and 1990s. Their research included 910 undergraduate and graduate students and found an overall reading compliance rate of only 33.9%. Similarly, Clump et al. (2004) reported that only 27% of their students completed assigned reading. In Hoeft’s (2012) study, 46% of her students self-reported doing the reading, but only 55% of those students could demonstrate a basic level of comprehension of the material.

Berry et al. (2011), in their study on textbook usage and study habits, found that only 20% to 30% of undergraduate students complete required readings. Phillips and Phillips (2007) conducted a study on textbook reading behavior of accounting students and found similar results. Their analysis revealed that only 17% of students read the textbook before discussing the content in class. When looking at required readings throughout a course, Starcher and

Proffitt (2011) found that 39.4% of students complete less than 50% of the required readings, with 4.5% of students not even bothering to purchase the textbooks.

Miller et al. (2018) posted course readings to a Harvard University online platform that allowed them to track how much their undergraduate students were reading. Only a third of their students complied with the suggested readings. Johnson (2019) interviewed faculty on the challenges of getting students to read. One respondent reported that students were becoming strategic about doing only what they needed to do to get the grades they wanted.

As Christian educators, we struggle with students choosing to do the least amount of work possible. This is because the Bible emphasizes that we should be good stewards in developing the talents and abilities we each have been given (Matthew 25:14-30). The Bible also emphasizes the value of gaining wisdom and encourages believers to actively seek wisdom. Proverbs 4:7 states, “Getting wisdom is the wisest thing you can do! And whatever else you do, develop good judgment.” In addition, Proverbs 3:14-15 states, “For wisdom is more profitable than silver, and her wages are better than gold. Wisdom is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her.”

Why Don’t Students Read?

Why do students believe they can get by without reading the course materials? Findings from research suggest a primary reason is that instructors are covering assigned reading material during lectures (Brost & Bradley, 2006; Culver & Hutchens, 2021). When students can rely on class slides and notes, they feel the payoff is not worth the effort to read. Lei et al. (2010) identified four additional reasons that students are not reading: (a) Students cannot read well enough to understand the content in textbooks, (b) students are not motivated to read, (c) students do not have enough time to complete all required reading, and (d) students underestimate the importance of reading the textbook. Starcher and Proffitt (2011) also surveyed 394 undergraduate business students. The main reasons those students cited for not reading the textbook included (a) lack of time, (b) the textbook being boring, (c) the information provided in the textbook not being meaningful to them, (d) the professor rarely referring to the textbook, and (e) not being tested on material from the textbook (Starcher & Proffitt, 2011).

Research also suggests that students feel it is the instructor’s responsibility to *spoon-feed* them the important material during class and explicitly point out the information that will appear on the exam (Clump et al., 2004; Culver & Hutchens, 2021). When students have this attitude, it severely limits the ability of the professor to incorporate

active learning activities and discussions during class that can engage students, help them make connections, and develop critical thinking skills. When foundational knowledge is absent, professors cannot progress to higher-level cognitive outcomes (Zakrajsek & Nilson, 2023). This leads to professors using class time to extract and summarize information from the reading materials that students must understand before they can cover more interesting or level-appropriate concepts (Culver & Hutchens, 2021). Unfortunately, this pedagogical practice creates a cycle that further reinforces students' attitudes that there is no need to read course material outside of class. When instructors use class time to provide overviews of textbook information and supply detailed study guides, slides, or handouts, students rely on these aids instead of reading (Culver & Hutchens, 2021).

Although the literature indicates a positive relationship between students completing reading assignments before class with their willingness to participate in class and their overall achievement, unless they are held accountable, students tend to postpone reading until an exam makes it a necessity (Burchfield & Sappington, 2000; Clump et al., 2004; Phillips & Phillips, 2007). In one study, researchers surveyed 423 undergraduates and found that students reported completing only 27% of assigned readings before the material was covered in class. However, they reported completing almost 70% of the assigned readings before the test, an indication of cramming for an exam due to concern for grades (Clump et al., 2004). Only when students feel the pressure of being held responsible for demonstrating their understanding of the material does their amount of reading increase (Clump et al., 2004).

What Motivates Students to Read?

In addition to assessing reading compliance, Hoeft (2012) also investigated the leading factors that motivated students to do the reading. The primary motivation cited by students was concern about grades. Other reasons cited were respect for the professor and interest in the course. Advice and recommendations from previous studies on ways to motivate students to read assigned material are to (1) give random quizzes and (2) give supplementary assignments (Brown et al., 2016; Burchfield & Sappington, 2000; Clump et al., 2004; Hoeft, 2012; Ryan, 2006).

Low-Stakes Assignments

Higher education literature suggests that low-stakes assignments, also known as formative assessments, provide students with opportunities to practice their learning and make mistakes without heavily impacting their final grades in the course (Roediger & Karpicke, 2006). Studies have

shown that providing students with frequent, low-stakes assignments increases active participation in class and better prepares them for high-stakes or summative assessments (Roediger & Karpicke, 2006). There are many versions of low-stakes assignments that professors can assign their students, including frequent quizzes, writing assignments, discussion boards, and case studies (Angelo & Cross, 1993).

Experiences at Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) Schools

Struggling to get students to do the required reading has been the authors' collective experiences with our students at two CCCU universities. Before January 2023, a management course at Evangel University did not explicitly tie points to reading textbook chapters. Exams were open book, but there was a time limit, so the professor naively assumed that students would at least skim the textbook before exams since they needed to be familiar with the material to finish the exam on time. That naivety was revealed in three eye-opening interactions with students on the day of the first exam in Fall 2022. One student brought their still shrink-wrapped textbook to class and unsealed it just before beginning the exam. A second student took the exam without a textbook, stating he had never purchased it. A third student realized that her textbook was not at school that morning. It was at her parents' house, still in the Amazon box.

In fall 2021 at Point Loma Nazarene University (PLNU), an upper-division accounting course professor attempted to hold students accountable for chapter reading by having them complete a standard, multiple-choice question quiz on an e-learning platform outside of class. These exams were untimed, open book, and gave each student the same questions. Instead of reading the textbook, most students used electronic books to search for answers to the quiz questions quickly. As a result, students would come to class unfamiliar with the content. This led to a frustrating experience for the professor and students, as the professor had to review basic content in class, leaving little time for more complex problems.

Use of Low-Stakes, Guided Reading Assignments

Based on the findings and recommendations from previous research that studied ways to motivate higher-ed students to read assigned material (Brown et al., 2016; Burchfield & Sappington, 2000; Clump et al., 2004; Hoeft, 2012; Ryan, 2006), this study investigated if low-stakes, guided reading assignments would motivate business students to read the course material before covering it in class. It also assessed students' perceived value of completing the reading assignments. We intentionally chose low-stakes, guided reading

Figure 1: Point Loma Nazarene University Student Survey

Question 1	1 pts
<p>The reading questions have helped me learn the material at a deeper level compared with the chapter quizzes completed last semester.</p> <hr/> <p><input type="radio"/> True</p> <hr/> <p><input type="radio"/> False</p>	

Question 2	1 pts
<p>I have several goals with the reading questions this semester, and have listed them below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To help you engage with the chapter material before coming to class and begin to learn the material at a deeper level than when you were taking a quiz on it 2. To help push some of the easier/more definition/theory concepts outside of class so we have more time to work problems in class 3. To help you outline the chapter and organize your learning and the material in each chapter 4. Overall, a deeper level of learning each chapter when compared with the quizzes that you took last semester. <p>Please comment on how effective the reading questions have been for you to achieve each goal. Any suggestions for improvement? Any other thoughts that would be helpful for me?</p>	

assignments to incorporate accountability in a lower-pressure format than the surprise quizzes suggested by Burchfield and Sappington (2000) and Clump et al. (2004).

METHODOLOGY

In an accounting course at Point Loma Nazarene University and a management course at Evangel University, we assigned guided reading questions for each textbook chapter to assist students in extracting crucial information from their readings. Students could also reuse these assignments as exam study guides. These reading assignments were implemented in an accounting class at PLNU in spring 2022 and a management class at Evangel University in spring 2023. Students in the management course consisted of business students in their final year of undergraduate education. The accounting class consisted of accounting students in their third year of undergraduate education. The

accounting students had experienced multiple-choice reading quizzes the previous semester with the same professor in a prerequisite course.


Writing Guided Reading Questions

The goals of the guided reading assignments in both classes were to:

1. Hold students accountable for reading the chapter before class (Burchfield & Sappington, 2000; Clump et al., 2004; Phillips & Phillips, 2007).
2. Push definitions and basic concepts outside class to free up class time for more complex topics and active learning (Culver & Hutchens, 2021).

Each professor created their own reading assignment questions for each chapter based on the content covered. Writing unique questions limited the opportunity for students to find standard answers online. While some of the questions asked students to note definitions and basic concepts, the professors also asked students to write about if

Figure 2: Point Loma Nazarene University IDEA Course Evaluation Survey



IDEA Teaching Methods

Quantitative							
	<i>Describe the frequency of your instructor's teaching procedures.</i>	<i>The Instructor:</i>	Hardly Ever	Occasion-ally	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost Always
TM-1	Found ways to help students answer their own questions						
TM-2	Helped students to interpret subject matter from diverse perspectives (e.g., different cultures, religions, genders, political views)						
TM-3	Encouraged students to reflect on and evaluate what they have learned						
TM-4	Demonstrate the importance and significance of the subject matter						
TM-5	Formed teams of groups to facilitate learning						
TM-6	Made it clear how each topic fit into the course						
TM-7	Provided meaning ful feedback on students' academic performance						
TM-8	Stimulated students to intellectual effort beyond that required by most courses						
TM-9	Encouraged students to use multiple resources (e.g., Internet library holdings, outside experts) to improve understanding						
TM-10	Explained course material clearly and concisely						
	<i>Describe the frequency of your instructor's teaching procedures.</i>	<i>The Instructor:</i>	Hardly Ever	Occasion-ally	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost Always
TM-11	Related course material to real life situations						
TM-12	Created opportunities for students to apply course content outside the classroom						
TM-13	Introduced stimulating ideas about the subject						
TM-14	Involved students in hands-on projects such as research, case studies, or real life activities						
TM-15	Inspired students to set and achieve goals which really challenged them						
TM-16	Asked students to share ideas and experience with others whose backgrounds and viewpoints differ from their own						
TM-17	Asked students to help each other understand ideas or concepts						
TM-18	Gave projects, tests, or assignments that required original or creative thinking						
TM-19	Encourage student-faculty interaction outside of class (e.g., office visits, phone calls, email)						

they agreed or disagreed with certain parts of what they read, to provide new insights gained, and to give personal application to the topics. Additionally, application and experiential questions that required students to think about what they had read were also included when writing the questions. For example, rather than asking students to identify Porter’s five forces of competition, an essential aspect of management, the students were given the following question: There are five forces that impact the level of competition. How many of the five forces are relevant in the Business Strategy Game (BSG) simulation? For each force you identified as relevant, briefly explain how/why it is applicable in BSG.

Another example from the accounting class at PLNU required students to think about past chapters and how they related to the covered content. In a chapter on intangible

assets and asset impairment testing, students were asked to think about whether the process for testing a tangible asset for impairment was the same as testing an intangible asset. Students were then asked to describe the differences and how they might be able to remember them.

Assigning Guided Reading Questions

At Evangel University, there were a total of eight chapter reading assignments with guided reading questions, each worth 10 points. Students were to complete and submit the reading questions in the LMS before class. Students could turn in reading assignments up to two days late for 60% of the original points. The reading assignments were considered low stakes since they were only 10 points each and accounted for just 9% of the total course points.

Figure 3: Evangel University Student Survey

Do not write your name. This is an anonymous survey.

Please circle your answer for questions 1-8. Write any feedback you have for question 9.

1. The BSG *reading assignments* motivated me to read material I may otherwise have elected not to read.
strongly agree / agree / disagree / strongly disagree
 2. The BSG *quizzes* motivated me to read material I may otherwise have elected not to read.
strongly agree / agree / disagree / strongly disagree
 3. Overall, I read & marked / read / skimmed / didn't read the BSG reading material.
 4. Reading the BSG material was valuable. It would have been more difficult to understand the simulation and do well on the quizzes if I had not taken the time to read the material outside of class.
strongly agree / agree / disagree / strongly disagree / not applicable-I didn't read
-

5. The textbook *reading assignments* motivated me to read material I may otherwise have elected not to read.
strongly agree / agree / disagree / strongly disagree
 6. The textbook *quizzes* motivated me to read material I may otherwise have elected not to read.
strongly agree / agree / disagree / strongly disagree
 7. Overall, I read & marked / read / skimmed / didn't read the textbook chapters.
 8. Reading the textbook was valuable. It would have been more difficult to understand the concepts and do well on the chapter quizzes if I would have relied only on the class lectures and not taken the time to read the material outside of class.
strongly agree / agree / disagree / strongly disagree / not applicable-I didn't read
-

9. Do you have suggestions for how the reading assignments could be improved?
 - Incorporate different questions such as...
 - Time the reading assignments so that...
 - Change the points / weight of the reading assignments (how?)
 - Other suggestions?

At PLNU, each reading assignment with guided reading questions was worth five points, the same number of points previously allocated to multiple-choice question reading quizzes. There were 10 chapters worth of reading questions and 25 students in the class, creating 250 total attempts at reading questions. Students were allowed to turn in one reading assignment late; however, late submissions were not accepted beyond that. Like Evangel University, students were required to submit the answers to their reading questions in the LMS before coming to class each week. The reading assignments were considered low stakes since they were only 10 points each and accounted for just 8% of the total course points. We intentionally implemented low-stakes assignments to encourage student accountability and help students see the benefits of being diligent in things that may appear to be of smaller value. This helps students live out Luke 16:10: “If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones.” We also incorporated the biblical principle of forgiveness (Ephesians 4:32) by giving students opportunities to turn in late assignments.

Data Collection

At the end of each semester, all data was collected in both courses using anonymous student surveys. PLNU’s instructor provided class time for students to complete a two-question survey integrated into their LMS (see Figure 1). All 25 students enrolled in the course completed the survey. Participants were all undergraduate junior accounting majors; 11 were male, and 14 were female.

In addition to collecting qualitative data at PLNU through student surveys, the instructor also collected quantitative data by targeting three questions on the IDEA student course evaluations (see Figure 2): (a) TM-1: Found ways to help students answer their own questions, (b) TM-3: Encouraged students to reflect on and evaluate what they have learned, and (c) TM-8: Stimulated students to intellectual effort beyond that required by most courses. Twenty-four of the 25 students enrolled in the course completed the IDEA course evaluation survey.

At Evangel University, students were given the option to complete an anonymous nine-question survey in class (see Figure 3). To incentivize students, the professor explained that the chapter reading assignments were new to this class, and the professor genuinely desired student feedback on whether the assignments were valuable. Students were also promised two extra credit points on an upcoming 36-point exam. All 38 students elected to complete the survey. Participants were all undergraduate seniors; 18 were male, and 20 were female.

In addition to collecting data from the in-class student surveys, the professor analyzed data from questions included in the end-of-semester student course evaluations administered through the LMS. The following questions provide a relevant comparison of students’ perceptions of the fall 2022 management course (taught without reading assignment questions) and the spring 2023 management course (that did incorporate textbook reading assignments).

1. Question 11: Course materials, textbooks, and readings are useful and/or relevant.
2. Question 17: As appropriate to the course and to the nature of the class, there were a fitting number of assignments.
3. Question 18: Assignments were beneficial to the course’s purposes.
4. Question 24: The required textbook and/or course materials I purchased/rented for this course were used enough to justify the cost.

After collecting data, each professor analyzed and evaluated their qualitative data for themes to determine how students perceived the guided reading questions. Quantitative data for the accounting class was analyzed using SPSS Statistics Software to run paired t-tests to determine whether significant differences existed between the accounting course, where students took a quiz (fall 2021), and the current course, where students completed reading questions (spring 2022).

Since spring 2023 was the first semester students completed reading assignments with guided reading questions in the management class at Evangel University, student responses to the in-class survey were analyzed by looking at each question and (a) calculating the frequency of each response option, (b) calculating the average, and (c) looking at student comments for themes. To analyze the data and draw conclusions from the questions on the LMS course survey, a two-sample t-test was run in Excel to compare student answers from the fall 2022 course (no graded reading assignments) with student answers from the spring 2023 course (included graded reading assignments).

RESULTS

Point Loma Nazarene University Accounting Class

Of the 250 total attempts at reading questions throughout the accounting class at PLNU, there were only five times during the semester that a student did not turn in their assignment. This finding shows that students took the assignment seriously despite only being worth five points per chapter. The survey results also indicated students had a

positive experience with the reading questions. In response to the statement, “The reading questions have helped me learn the material at a deeper level compared with the chapter quizzes completed last semester,” all 25 students responded in the affirmative.

When asked to comment on the effectiveness of the reading questions in achieving the desired goals, students overwhelmingly noted that the reading questions held them accountable for doing the reading, helped them better understand the material before coming to class, and helped them feel more engaged in class. Some of the most meaningful student comments are provided below:

1. “I think the reading questions have been helpful. They actually make me read the material and internalize it, which has been helpful for the harder topics. Before, I was just skimming the material and looking for the equations. I have also enjoyed having more time to work on problems in class, as this is really how I learn, through practice. While I do spend more time on these assignments than on the quizzes, I think it is time well spent, as I am able to come to class with a basic outline of the material that I can look at later.”
2. “I used to skim the chapters before class when starting a new chapter, so I never fully grasped the concepts. With the provided outline, I have been able to concentrate on specific details, which increased my overall knowledge. I loved this change because it made me feel as if I was on track and noting the important details.”
3. “I actually really appreciated the reading questions. I felt that completing those before the lecture allowed me to understand the basis of each chapter so then when I was in class, I could understand the content at a deeper level quicker. I felt that the questions were a value-add to the structure of the course and to my personal learning.”
4. “With the incorporation of the reading questions, I have felt that when completing the problems in class, there is a better framework on the fundamentals and steps taken. The quizzes did not prepare me well for

each chapter as it seemed like just an extra assignment I tried to rush through. The reading questions help me to find the key information within the text, turning my focus to these particular areas. Having this groundwork before attending class seems to have had a positive impact on my learning, allowing more time to understand and work the problems in class.”

5. “This is the first time I have read a chapter from a textbook before class. The reading questions force me to read and get my feet wet with the material so that I am not hearing everything for the first time in class.”

The quantitative data collected compared IDEA Student Evaluations for the same student population between fall 2021 and spring 2022. The fall 2021 course was a pre-requisite of the spring 2022 course and included the same instructor and group of students. Specifically, the instructor looked at scores related to the following teaching procedure questions: (a) TM-1: Found ways to help students answer their own questions, (b) TM-3: Encouraged students to reflect on and evaluate what they have learned, and (c) TM-8: Stimulated students to intellectual effort beyond that required by most courses. Table 1 shows the results of the paired t-tests comparing the scores each semester. Not only were mean increases seen in all areas, but significant differences ($p < 0.05$) also occurred.

Evangel University Management Class

In a management class at Evangel University, eight textbook chapters were associated with guided reading question assignments. Individually, at 10 points each, the reading questions seemed low stakes. However, considering that the eight guided reading question assignments were worth 80/893 or 9% of the total grade, they accounted for almost a grade letter difference in the final grade. All 38 students completed the in-class anonymous student survey. The goal of the survey was to discover the following:

1. To what degree the reading assignments motivated students to read the textbook.
2. To what degree quizzes motivated students to read the textbook.
3. How thoroughly the students read the textbook.
4. Whether students viewed reading the textbook as valuable.

Table 1: Paired t-tests comparing Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 IDEA Evaluation Scores (N=24)

		Mean Score	Difference	t statistic	p-value
(a) Found ways to help students answer their own questions	Fall 2021 Spring 2022	4.17 4.71	0.542	-5.214	<.001*
(b) Encouraged students to reflect on and evaluate what they learned	Fall 2021 Spring 2022	4.33 4.83	0.500	-3.715	<.001*
(c) Stimulated students to intellectual effort beyond that required by most courses	Fall 2021 Spring 2022	4.25 4.75	0.500	-4.153	<.001*

Table 2: Results of Evangel University In-class Student Survey (N=38)

Textbook Reading Assignments Motivated	Textbook Quizzes Motivated	Textbook Reading Thoroughness	Textbook Reading Valuable
M=4.211	M=4.184	M=3.027	M=3.676
Legend 5=strongly agree 4=agree 2=disagree 1=strongly disagree	Legend 5=strongly agree 4=agree 2=disagree 1=strongly disagree	Legend 5=read & marked 4=read 2=skimmed 1=didn't read	Legend 5=strongly agree 4=agree 2=disagree 1=strongly disagree

Table 2 shows the mean response rates to these four items.

The survey results indicate that overall, students agreed or strongly agreed that the reading assignments motivated them to read the textbook (M=4.211). In comparing whether reading assignments or quizzes were more motivating, results indicate that students found the reading assignments (M=4.211) and quizzes (M=4.184) about equally motivating.

Although students were motivated to read the textbook, survey answers suggest the thoroughness with which they read varied between skimming (17 students) and reading (18 students). The value students saw in reading the textbook was also varied. Eleven students either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that reading the textbook provided value. Eighteen students agreed that reading was valuable, and nine students strongly agreed.

Open-ended comments left on the student surveys reveal two main factors that contributed to students not finding the reading assignments valuable and/or choosing to skim. First, some students admitted that the guided reading assignments did not motivate them to read because the point values were low. Comments revealing this mindset were:

1. "Increase points."
2. "Increase the weight of reading assignments so [we are] more highly motivated to read and truly understand the material."
3. "Change the points. Ten points for a 45-minute to 1-hour assignment sometimes didn't seem equal."

Second, when answering the guided reading questions, some students chose to skim rather than read the textbook because the professor covered the textbook material well during class. Comments revealing this were:

1. "The textbook felt dry and just repeated in a more boring manner what was discussed in class."
2. "If you go over the same information on the PowerPoint, it makes me less motivated to read the book because you did it for me."
3. "Lectures taught just as much as textbook."

4. "Make them due after we covered it in class because you explain it well."

To compare student perceptions between the fall 2022 class (no textbook reading assignments) and the spring 2023 class (incorporated textbook reading assignments), we utilized the course evaluation survey administered through the LMS as an additional reference point. The LMS survey contained three relevant questions for assessing whether the reading assignments improved students' opinions of the course. We performed two-sample t-tests for each of the three survey questions to see if the differences in mean ratings for the fall 2022 class and spring 2023 class were statistically significant.

For survey question 11 ("Course materials, textbooks, and reading are useful and/or relevant"), there was a significant difference in student ratings between fall 2022 (M = 4.23, SD = 1.01) and spring 2023 (M = 4.79, SD = .15); $t(44) = 2.53, p = .007$. This difference indicates that student perception of the textbook and readings being valuable and relevant increased significantly in spring 2023 when textbook reading assignments were added.

For survey question 17 ("As appropriate to the course and to the nature of the class, there were a fitting number of assignments"), there was not a significant difference in student rating between fall 2022 (M=4.54, SD = .66) and spring 2023 (M = 4.62, SD = .55); $t(45) = .42, p = .34$. This result indicates that even though the spring 2023 class had eight additional reading assignments the fall 2022 class did not have, the spring 2023 class still felt the number of assignments was appropriate.

For survey question 18 ("Assignments were beneficial to the course's purposes"), there was a significant difference in student ratings between fall 2022 (M = 4.39, SD = .96) and spring 2023 (M = 4.74, SD = .45); $t(45) = 1.72, p = .047$. This result indicates that the students in the spring 2023 course felt more strongly that the course assignments were beneficial.

Figure 4: Evangel University LMS Survey Question #24

24 - The required textbook and/or course materials I purchased/rented for this course were used enough to justify the cost. (If you did not purchase or rent any textbooks and/or course materials for this course, please answer "Not Applicable.")					
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent	Percent Responses	Means
Strongly Disagree	(1)	0	0.00%		
Disagree	(2)	0	0.00%		
Neutral	(3)	2	5.88%		
Agree	(4)	15	44.12%		
Strongly Agree	(5)	15	44.12%		
Not Applicable	(0)	2	5.88%		
				0 25 50 100	
Response Rate					
34/38 (89.47%)					

A new question added to the spring 2023 LMS student course evaluations is shown in Figure 4. The answers to this question reveal two interesting pieces of information. First, only two out of 34 students chose not to acquire the textbook. This is impressive considering students could not use their textbooks for exams during the spring 2023 semester. Second, most students, 30 out of 34, either agree or strongly agree that they used their textbook enough to justify the cost.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated student compliance with required reading assignments (Burchfield & Sappington, 2000; Hoeft, 2012) and incorporated low-stakes, guided reading questions as motivation (Hoeft, 2012; Ryan, 2006). An added component of the study was assessing students' perceived value of the low-stakes assignments. Based on the results of this study, adding guided reading questions as required assignments to motivate student textbook reading does increase reading compliance. Not only did student compliance with reading assignments increase, but most students perceived the assignments to be valuable additions to their learning. This was true in management, a discipline within business that is more qualitative, and accounting, which is more quantitative.

While not formally measured in the scope of this study, in the two classes where we implemented guided reading questions, we observed several important patterns that add to the potential benefits of this kind of intervention. Students who completed the assigned readings and associated reading questions came to class more prepared than in previous semesters. This preparation allowed us to use class time to help students build on the foundation they gained through reading and to focus on more complex elements of the material. It also left time and space for the application of the content. In accounting, more class time was spent

working on practice problems and giving students time to work through complex problems in groups. This allowed students to gain experience working with the calculations and journal entries they would later see on homework and exams. In management, the professor was able to spend less time introducing foundational textbook concepts and more time helping students make connections between the textbook concepts and the associated simulation on which they worked.

The professors also observed increased student engagement during class time than in previous semesters. In accounting, students demonstrated their engagement by actively working with their peers to solve problems instead of waiting for the professor to provide the answer. In management, students better understood how to apply the textbook concepts and expressed more confidence in their ability to do well on the semester-long team simulation.

In accounting, where students had taken quizzes instead of answering guided reading questions the previous semester, they openly expressed their appreciation for the change made between the fall and spring semesters. Additionally, when answering the final question for each chapter, which asked students to reflect on the most confusing aspect of the reading, the answers evolved throughout the semester. At the beginning of the semester, students would answer vaguely with statements such as "I just need to see it in class" or "Nothing really." As the semester progressed, however, students started asking questions about how to apply what they had read to the accounting profession or other classes.

Limitations

Several limitations are important to acknowledge in this study. First, the scope was limited to measuring reading compliance and student perceptions of the value of completing the assigned reading. It did not attempt to measure student learning or compare student performance before and after adding guided reading assignments. While measuring student learning and performance would have been

interesting, too many confounding variables were present in each researcher's class to isolate and determine causality. Despite not measuring performance and learning directly, we believe, based on student comments and anecdotal evidence, that there is a positive correlation between reading compliance and student learning.

Second, while implementation was similar at each university, it was not the same, which could cause differences in results. Point Loma had a two-course sequence to measure before and after results, whereas Evangel University had a different group of students from one semester to another. The differences in research design have limitations to the generalizability of the results. The courses also had different audiences, with management having a variety of business majors and accounting having only accounting majors. Additionally, both courses were upper-division undergraduate courses, and results could differ in lower-division undergraduate courses or graduate courses. Only one semester of data for the two classes was collected, resulting in a small sample size.

On a more practical level, there are some challenges that come with professors assigning guided reading questions in any course. One challenge is that each guided reading question assignment must be graded. Depending on the number of students in each class and how many classes this approach is implemented, this approach could burden the faculty member's time. We acknowledge that this approach is more time-consuming than alternatives like multiple-choice question quizzes.

Future Research

There are many opportunities for future research. First, whether students learned and/or grades improved because of the guided reading questions was beyond the scope of this study. Measuring student learning and its impact on exam scores and/or overall course grades is an important area of future research. Second, investigating whether implementing guided reading questions yields similar positive results to those found in business across academic majors in higher education (e.g., liberal arts, math, science, etc.) would be a valuable area of future research.

Additionally, the literature suggests that students are less inclined to read when instructors cover the material during lectures. When students can rely on class slides and notes, they feel the payoff is not worth the effort to read (Brost & Bradley, 2006; Culver & Hutchens, 2021). Future research could measure compliance rates between a class where the professor does use some class time to cover basic textbook material versus a class where the professor focuses on active learning and group activities.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) platforms, like ChatGPT, have become more prominent in higher education since data collection for this study. Future research could look at these AI platforms' impact on students reading the textbook to answer guided reading questions instead of using AI to answer them. Practically, due to the accessibility of AI, instructors need to write guided reading questions in ways that present a challenge for AI to answer. Questions should be specific to the course and/or personal experience of the student to avoid the student copying and pasting them into an AI chatbot for the answer. Alternatively, instructors could develop activities that require students to apply what they read rather than answer questions about the reading.

Finally, comparing how thoroughly students read and come to class prepared when a professor uses guided reading assignments versus mind dump in-class exercises would be interesting. Mind dump motivates students to seriously absorb assigned materials by allowing them to take 5-10 minutes at the beginning of class to write down everything they can remember from the assigned reading. The professor then collects these papers and returns them to students on quiz and exam days so students can use them as references while taking the quiz or exam (Zakrajsek & Nilson, 2023).

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