SAGrader™ Montgomery County Public Schools MCPS

It would be tough to find a more dedicated, creative psychology teacher than Joe. He recently finished a fantasy novel called Need For Magic that integrates principles of social psychology into the story line. Joe's next project is a curated collection of psychology-related videos that can be used to help illustrate concepts in Psych 101, such as classical conditioning.

Joe is passionate about finding effective ways to teach that go beyond lecturing and reading a textbook. He's been using SAGrader since 2010.

Why did you decide to use SAGrader?

I decided to use SAGrader because I know that writing is critical to the study of psychology, but I was getting discouraged that I could not give my students the attention their writing needed. In addition to improving their writing skills for academic's sake, I wanted to prepare them better for the writing portion of the AP exam.

How has your class improved since you started using SAGrader?

After my students became accustomed to using SAGrader, they have become more engaged in writing. Despite the fact that SAGrader allows me to assign them more work, they seem to be more proactive in completing the increased work load. I think it is because the can work on an essay for a few minutes, get good feedback, take a break and retry at another time. It puts the control in their hands.

With their busy schedule of practice, part time work and other classes, SAGrader allows them to work on the essays when it is convenient for them. I think that allows them to take ownership.

What are your favorite benefits?

By far the greatest benefit is the increased communication I have with my students regarding their writing. I didn't expect that. On some level I thought SAGrader would allow me to step back, save some time and let the software grade several hundred of the same essays.

What I have found, through answering challenges and watching their scores rise, is that I am more engaged without spending more time. I can reply back to specific questions and misconceptions.

What would you say to other instructors?

I would say that SAGrader actually increases student and teacher involvement in the writing process. While the students might spend a bit more time, the teachers will spend less time but get better results.

SAGrader allows teachers to focus their efforts on students that need help and concepts that are challenging rather than spreading their attention too thinly on everything and everyone.