



Bridging the Social Distance

Utilizing Peer-Assisted Learning Models in Combination with SMART Goals to Facilitate Academic Achievement

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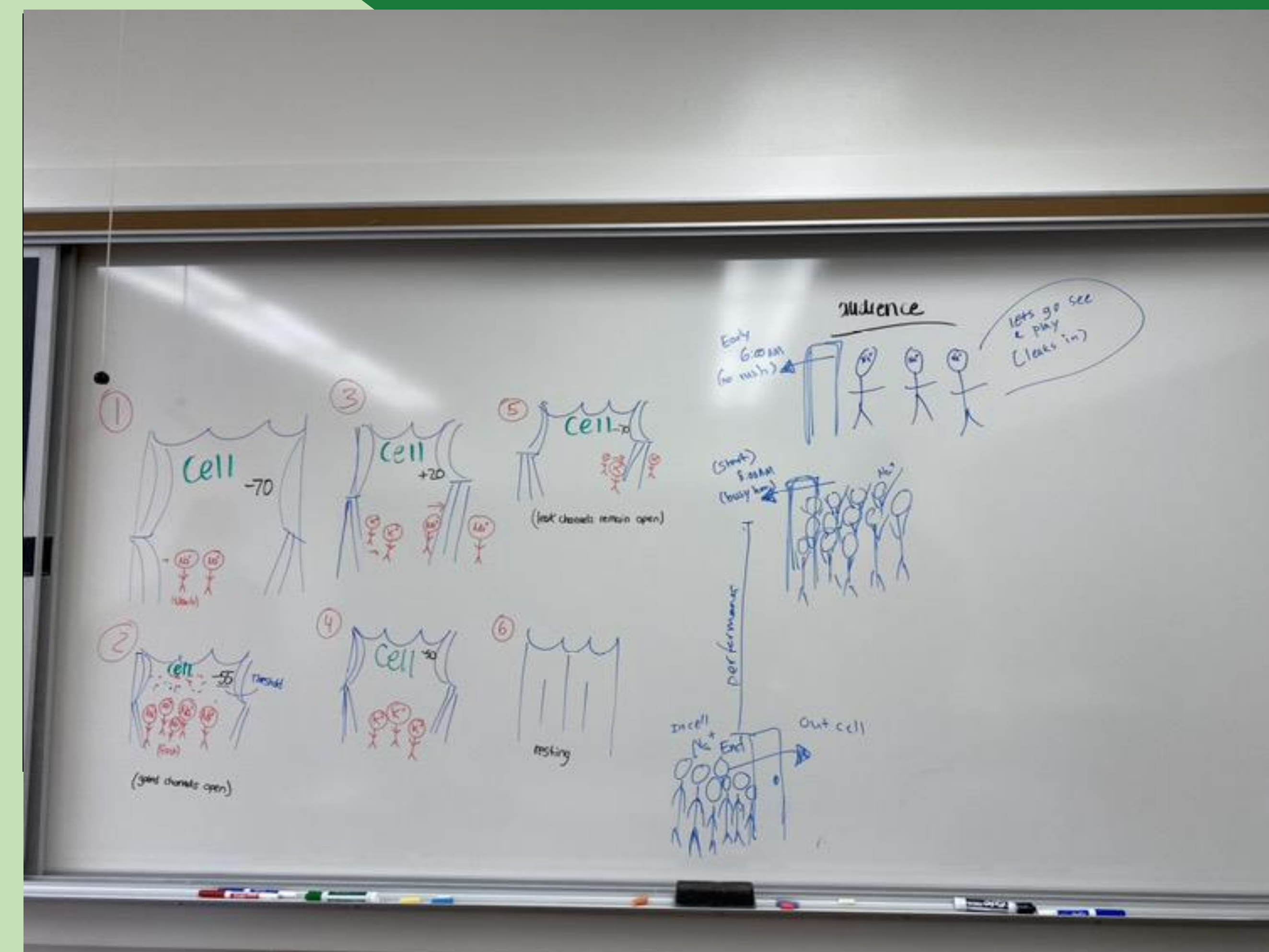
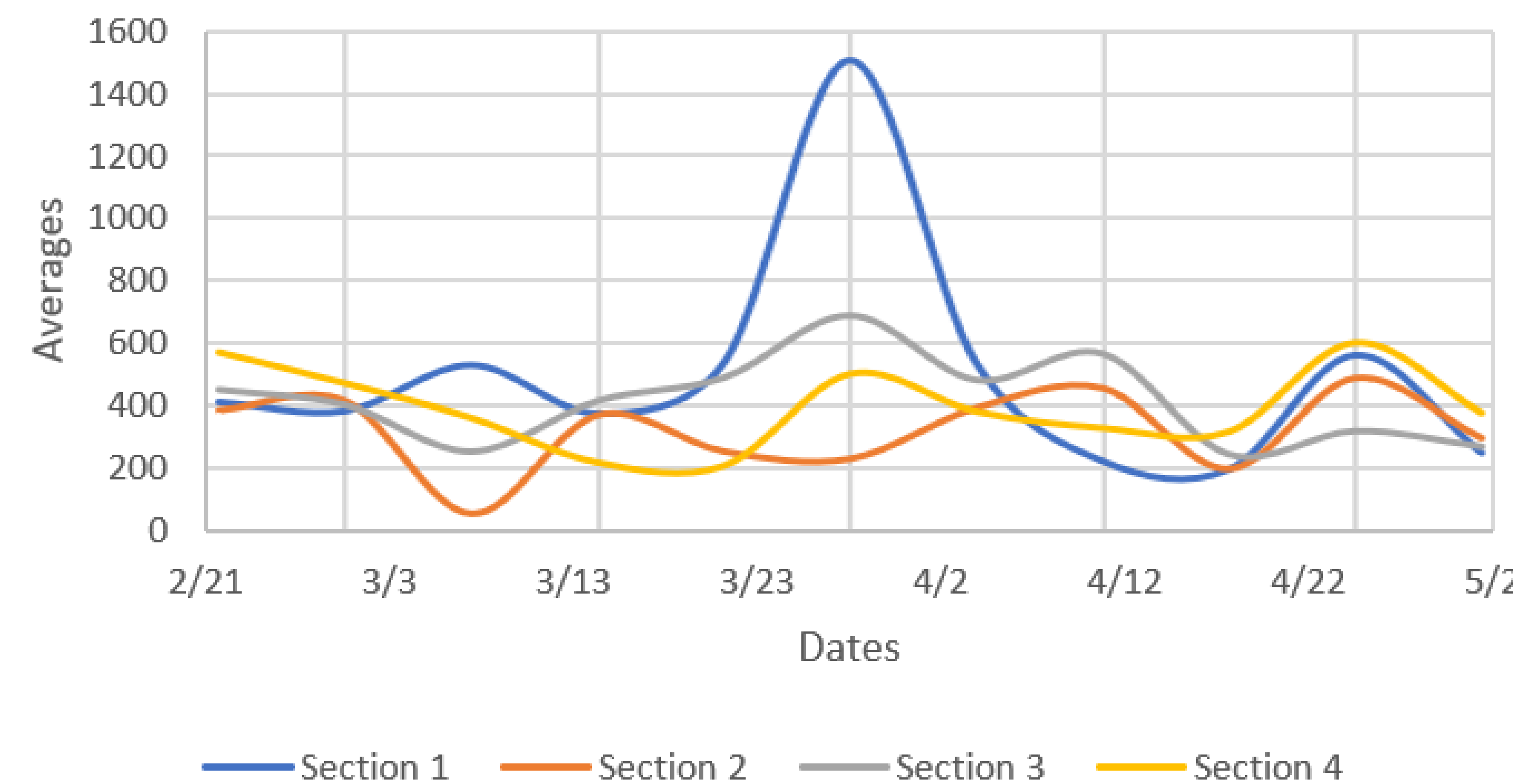
Introduction

Our goal is to foster relationships amongst students in PAL and build a safe space for students to improve their confidence and intrapersonal skills. We had facilitators start their classes by having non-school related conversations, kept the student groups the same, and reached out to students via group chat to establish connections beyond the classroom experience. Students and facilitators will know if the goals are reached when students can speak to each other more comfortably about non-school related topics. This can be evident from their body language such as an eagerness to reply and increased interaction amongst peers. Facilitators recorded the volume in their PAL classrooms and surveyed students to determine how student engagement changed over time. Facilitators also provided input with regard to the community built within their classes and how these fostered relationships can help students be more collaborative in completing worksheets and sharing studying techniques.

Methodology

To execute and gain evidence that building relationships and connections amongst peers in the same or similar STEM classes can be extremely beneficial for students, not only towards their grade in the class but overall contentment throughout the semester. To measure contentment, we will be having students complete a survey consisting of questions about their week as a whole, how they felt about class material that week, and if they felt that their peers in PAL helped them better understand material or concepts towards the end of the week (either on Wednesdays or Thursdays). We will also be assigning systematic questions, irrelevant to the subject matter to create discussion amongst the students. These systemic questions will be related to common hobbies, likes, interests, or even dislikes. We will measure the duration that these discussions actively go on for without intervention from PAL facilitators but will not let these discussions go on for longer than 6-7 minutes). To measure if students are building connections in the class, we will also be measuring the activity levels (number of postings, how many people participate in a discussion, academic topics, or topics irrelevant to the subject) in each of the four PAL group chats.

Frequency Averages



Check out the survey results here!



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Survey Questions

1. On a scale of 1-5 (1 uncomfortable and 5 being super comfortable), when having conversations how effective do you feel you were able to build relationships?
2. On a scale of 1-5 (1 being very uncomfortable and 5 being very comfortable), how comfortable did you feel contributing to class discussions (including participating on the worksheet)?
3. Some PALs had topics of conversation provided by the Facilitator during the first few minutes of class. If your PAL had facilitated conversations at the beginning of class, in what ways did this affect the relationships among students in class?
4. If your PAL did not have facilitated conversations, do you believe they would have made a difference in terms of student connection? Why or why not?
5. In your opinion, what helps to encourage connection among students in classes like this?

Analysis/Conclusion

In conclusion, our project was successful. The students' engagement, measured by megahertz's, increased over time. As you can see in the data, the growth from the first few weeks to the last few is small, but still there. Towards the end, the data starts to lower, we attribute this to the seriousness that comes with finals. Overall, we are happy with the results of our project, and we believe that it had a positive impact on the students' engagement levels. At the end of the semester, we surveyed students to measure how they felt about the engagement levels and comfortability in their classes. Our data showed that students who participated in the non-stem conversations ended up engaging more than those who did not. This was likely due to the increased opportunities for interaction and discussion. In addition, the non-stem conversations helped to create a more comfortable and inclusive environment for all students. We believe that this type of dialogue is essential for fostering a love of learning in all students.

References

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