Peer-led Team Learning: An Active Learning Paradigm for Improved Student Success

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Higher Education Concerns

❖ Low student success: High “below average” rates
❖ Retention in courses and curricula
❖ Lack of faculty attention to students in high-enrollment entry-level service courses
❖ Opportunities to improve diversity in programs
❖ Departments not doing enough to address these concerns
Academic Stressors

- Commuter-based campus: Student isolation and lack of community
- Perceived difficulty of the material from wide cross-section of preparation
- Low student motivation
- Transition from high school to college stressful
- Insufficient faculty-student interaction
- Insufficient student engagement in learning
PLTL: What is it?

- Theoretical mapping exercise to grasp concepts and develop problem solving skills through well constructed exercises. It is not tutoring.

- Not a threat: Framework for a conducive and engaging learning environment, with peers

- Peer leaders: Meet weekly to evaluate WS effectiveness, discuss reflective log entries, and solve more difficult problems
PLTL: What is it?

- Traditional or current lecture arrangement
- Small subset companion group of larger lecture class
- Team learning: 6-9 students facilitated by recent class peer (B or better in course)
- Workshop session activities: 2 hours every week
  - Self Test preparation: open-ended to exposing preconceived notions; first 15 minutes (leveling)
  - Workshop session: uncovers what students do not know in a comfortable place; rest of class time (raising)
  - Post Workshop: measures ability to internalize material; take home activity (leveling)
First Semester Chemistry, DFW, Fall

Means

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99+% CI

Thursday, October 22, 2009
First Semester Chemistry, DFW, Fall

Standardized Exam: Same Performance before and after

Means

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Student Leader Benefits

Intellectual - Improved self-confidence
- Review previously learned material from fresh perspective
- Solve more in-depth problems during preparatory leader meetings
- Practice writing reflective self-evaluations on workshop class

Environmental
- Practice group facilitation skills
- Personal satisfaction in role
- Close faculty contact: improved mutual awareness and community
Qualities of Effective Leaders

- Effective Interpersonal Skills
- Integrity: Ethics
- Ability to Inspire Confidence
- Visionary
- Critical Thinker, Problem Solver
- Communicator
- Flexible
Reference Studies: Other approaches

- “Seven Principles of Good Practice” (Chickering and Gamson)
  - Targets diversity improvement and expansion
  - Establishes visible connections to civic engagement

- National Survey of Student Engagement
  - Student Participation in Programs and Activities vs. Learning and Personal Growth
  - Survey empirically confirmed 5 “good practices”
  - Institution can alter policies to boost college experience
Challenges to Success

- Up front costs
- Administrative load
- Must demonstrate future income and enrollments
- Identifying funding sources
- PLTL Workbook or other materials must be tailored to your student demographic profile and curriculum
- Changes in administration
Minimalist Approach

- Sections: 6-9 students
- Student leaders
- Student leader training
- Workbook for workshops
- Scholarship funds available?
- Faculty and administrative champions