

Peer Tutoring

Successful students can work one-on-one with a student or in small groups to help peers understand particularly difficult concepts.

Appropriate Student Level: Any level

Suggested Class Size: 3 – 100+

Ease of Use Rating: Moderate

Activity Description:

Peer tutoring enables students to mentor peers, explore challenging material and provide more practice opportunities. You may establish tutoring through the University Learning Centers (<http://www.ulrc.psu.edu/>) or implement your own system in or out of class. Peer tutoring can provide students with additional opportunities for success.

Peer tutoring in a classroom can be implemented in a number of ways. If instructors want to implement a tutoring session during class-time, they can.

1. Choose the tutors (or ask for volunteers) from the class prior to the tutoring session class
2. Give tutors a concept or topic and allow them time to review
3. Break the class up into groups with tutors leading the group who present the information and answer questions from any student in the group. Students sometimes understand concepts better when explained by their peers rather than by an expert.

This method can be used similarly to student-led discussions in that students can be grouped together in small group to exchange ideas and questions. The difference, however, is that the group time is a ‘teaching’ time to explore concepts students must understand to move forward to more complex ideas that will be presented.

A second way to use peer tutoring is to move the session groups to outside of class. In this model, it is more difficult for the instructor to monitor the sessions and be available to help tutors with difficult questions, but valuable class-time is not lost to review topics for possibly only a few students. In an outside tutoring session, the group size may be reduced to one-on-one, topics may not be pre-selected and the time is not limited by a class period.

In either method, students are encouraged to learn from each other.

References:

Baillie, Caroline A. (June 1999) “Peer tutoring in crystallography”. European Journal of Engineering Education, 24(2) ; pg. 173.

Donaldson, A. J. M. & Topping, K. J. (1996). “Promoting Peer Assisted Learning Among Students in Further & Higher Education.” SEDA Paper 96.

Page, Diana (Spring 2000) “Improving undergraduate student involvement in management science and business writing courses using the seven principles in action”; Education, 120(3); pg. 547.

Topping, K. J. (1996) "Effective Peer Tutoring in Further & Higher Education." SEDA Paper 95.
Virtanen, Pekka J. (May 1999); "What happens in PBL tutorial sessions? Analysis of medical students' written accounts". Medical Teacher, 21(3); pg. 270

The Core Competencies are:

1. Writing, speaking and/or other forms of self-expression
3. Synthesis and analysis in problem solving and critical thinking, including, where appropriate, the application of reasoning and interpretive methods, and quantitative thinking.
4. Collaborative learning and teamwork
7. A significant alternative competency for active learning designed for and appropriate to a specific course