

PEER-LED TEAM LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION

HOW DO I GET STARTED? AN OPEN LETTER

JACK KAMPMEIER

Dear colleague interested in Peer-Led Team Learning:

Good news about your enthusiasm for the PLTL idea. I think the most important thing you can do is to attend one of the Chautauqua programs or the MID Project presentations (1999-2005). Try to take a team with you— e.g., the Director of Learning Assistance Center, some potential leaders, another colleague or two. Co-opt them into the model.

The process for choosing the leaders is discussed in some detail in the *Peer-Led Team Learning Guidebook* (Gosser, et al., 2001) from Prentice Hall. I think you will have lots of good applicants because it works so well, because it works closely with you, because it is so much fun and provides so much satisfaction. Anyway, it is better than most other campus jobs. I write a letter of invitation to the good students in my course; it is a flattering letter that also tells what they might get out of the experience. A generic version is in the appendix to the *Guidebook*. At the University of Rochester, we (at least one faculty member, coordinator and current workshop leader) then interview the students in groups (like a workshop). We base the interviews on scenarios that come up in workshop (e. g., one student talks all the time--what do you do about it?). We choose leaders based on their interpersonal skills and insights demonstrated in the group interview. We also pay attention to their grades.

As part of the interview process, we tell the new leaders that they have to take a leader training class. We meet Friday afternoons when there are fewer scheduling conflicts. We finish the recruiting process before the leaders register for the next semester, so they know they have to fit our class into their schedule. Everyone manages to make it fit. Do not wait until Fall when they have made other commitments for their time. We finish our recruiting mid-April with the contract-signing.

I think that it is essential that you find ways to work cooperatively with the Director of the Learning Assistance Center. The Director can be a great ally for you in developing PLTL, providing know-how, leader training and even budget support. Students' contact with the Learning Assistance Center is improved by implementing the PLTL workshops. The Center and your involvement will reach more students, as opposed to one-on-one tutoring or other programs. The Center may come to see that PLTL is a better way to spend the money.

I shoot for eight students per team. If this requires too many leaders, consider the wisdom of starting with half the class--let them volunteer. Then you can scale up next year. This simplifies and provides a built-in control.

Be sure to get three books from Prentice Hall: *The Guidebook, Handbook for Leaders* and one of the discipline- specific workbooks, e.g., *Organic Chemistry*-all under the supra title: Peer Led Team Learning.

Copy everything you can from us and let me know if I can help in other ways. Carry on!

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