The Peer Learning Association and the Learning by Teaching Model

Jean Heitz

University of Wisconsin – Madison, Department of Zoology, 250 North Mills St., Madison WI 53706 USA
(jgheitz@wisc.edu)

Beginning in 2009, a dedicated group of undergraduates took the initiative on the UW-Madison campus to develop a Peer Learning Association. The Peer Learning Association (PLA) operates by working with interested faculty/staff in development of peer learning programs tailored to their students’ needs. The core concept behind the program is “learning by teaching” (Ploetzner et al. 1999). The specific topics/concepts to be addressed are determined by the course’s faculty/staff and are communicated to peer members in advance of the weekly meetings. Peer members are responsible for learning the material well enough to teach it to others. The Peer Facilitator randomly assigns topics/concepts to peer members. During sessions, our Peer Facilitators "lead from the sidelines"; they do not lecture. Their primary role during their weekly sessions is to keep the peer group on track or to steer peer group members in the right direction via Socratic questioning. It is the peer group members who teach each other. This session described the basic organization of the PLA, the weekly training we provide our Peer Facilitators and the organization of a typical weekly peer group session. Access to the PLA handbook and time for questions about the organization can be found at: https://uwmadison.box.com/v/PeerLearning.

Mission, Review Process & Disclaimer

The Association for Biology Laboratory Education (ABLE) was founded in 1979 to promote information exchange among university and college educators actively concerned with teaching biology in a laboratory setting. The focus of ABLE is to improve the undergraduate biology laboratory experience by promoting the development and dissemination of interesting, innovative, and reliable laboratory exercises. For more information about ABLE, please visit http://www.ableweb.org/.

Papers published in Tested Studies for Laboratory Teaching: Peer-Reviewed Proceedings of the Conference of the Association for Biology Laboratory Education are evaluated and selected by a committee prior to presentation at the conference, peer-reviewed by participants at the conference, and edited by members of the ABLE Editorial Board.

Citing This Article

Compilation © 2016 by the Association for Biology Laboratory Education, ISBN 1-890444-17-0. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner. ABLE strongly encourages individuals to use the exercises in this proceedings volume in their teaching program. If this exercise is used solely at one’s own institution with no intent for profit, it is excluded from the preceding copyright restriction, unless otherwise noted on the copyright notice of the individual chapter in this volume. Proper credit to this publication must be included in your laboratory outline for each use; a sample citation is given above.

© 2016 by Jean Heitz