Benefits of Learning Assistants in Physics Recitations

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How Recitation Helps

Recitations help students repeat and review the new material that they have recently learned in lecture in order for them to fully comprehend everything. Furthermore, recitation:
- Helps integrate and understand key physics concepts.
- Develops problem-solving skills.
- Connects math and equations with concepts.
- Develops the ability to think more deeply and visualize the subject matter by applying it to real life situations presented in the worksheets.
- Relates physics to everyday life.

Schools with LAs in Recitation

- The university’s Physics Teaching Education Coalition states that “often, the LAs serve as the primary instructor in the recitation.” - North Carolina State University
- “LAs have been exposed to the course content much more recently and undergo more pedagogical training than TAs, so their ideas about student difficulties are more accurate.” -University of Colorado at Boulder
- “LAs ensure that students are understanding the material the professor has gone over in lecture during that week.”-Arizona State University

Role of LAs in Recitation

- Attending lecture and answering any questions students may have
- Meeting with the professor and informing him or her of students who might need special attention
- Holding office hours for students to come to them directly with homework or material questions
- Working with students in recitation

Benefits of LAs in Recitation

- Provide an additional perspective to students beyond the instructor
- Encourage cooperative learning
- Increase student participation
- Decrease student to teacher ratio
- To provide feedback to the instructor.
- Encourages more students to pursue teaching careers.

Benefits Focusing on Social and Emotional Aspects

Comments (# of responses)
- More relaxed atmosphere makes problem-solving easy (15)
  It was fun (12)
  Greater responsibility- for myself and the group (4)
  Made new friends (3)

Improving Recitation

- Organize recitations so students learn the material in lecture before it is covered in recitation
- Gear-problem sets toward covered material and test questions
- Shorten problem sets so focus is on material not on lack of time
- Implement LA’s into recitations in order to answer more student questions and create a more relaxed environment