



# THE IMPORTANCE OF PEER LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF COLLEGE LEVEL FORENSIC SCIENCE EDUCATION



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## INTRODUCTION

Peer learning in a college setting is, in a sentence, students helping one another learn. However, this method of expanding and deepening one's knowledge is distinct from tutoring, teaching, learning- or teaching-assistant facilitated review. The key aspect of peer learning that distinguishes it from other forms of instruction is that there is only a small gap between the knowledge of one person and the other. [5] This eliminates the expert blind spot that frustrates many students taking college courses. Professors, especially in the field of science, are so far advanced in their learning from students that they often assume students' knowledge of certain concepts. Peer learning can be manifested in nearly any manner: students summarizing a day's lecture, working through problems together, explaining general concepts, developing practise problems, grading each others' practise exams, or any of an infinite number of study and learning methods.



## WHAT IS PEER LEARNING?

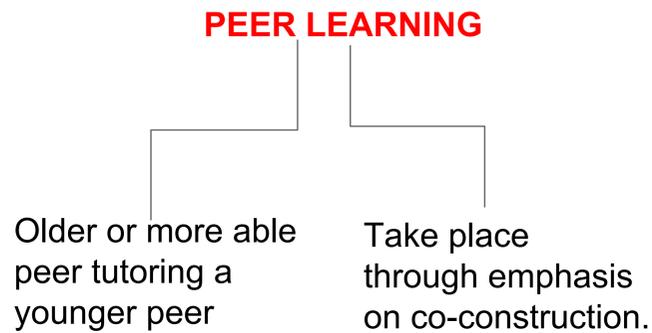
- [1]Positive Interdependence'
- Face-to-face interaction
- Group processing
- Individual group accountability

## WHY IS PEER LEARNING IMPORTANT IN THE FIELD OF FORENSIC SCIENCE?

- Reports show that learning was a direct result of the interaction that took place during the lesson
- Acts as a catalyst for subsequent cognitive development

## HOW DOES IT TAKE PLACE?

Based on Piaget's theory and Vygotskian construction, peer learning in science can take place through 2 main processes:



But, to realise the benefits of peer learning, teachers must provide 'intellectual scaffolding'.

[2]Research indicates that peer learning activities typically result in: **team-building** spirit and more **supportive relationships**, greater **psychological well-being**, social competence, communication skills and self-esteem, and higher achievement and **greater productivity** in terms of enhanced learning outcomes.

## MAIN BENEFITS OF PEER LEARNING IN THE FIELD OF FORENSIC SCIENCE

- [3]Students receive more time for individualized learning.
- Direct interaction between students promotes active learning. Active learning encourages debates and discussions.
- Peer teachers reinforce their own learning by instructing others. Concepts that seemed unclear to the teacher itself, is clarified while explaining to others and that's what the field of forensic science is all about, constant cross examination and subsequent improvement of existing concepts.
- Students feel more comfortable and open when interacting with a peer. The peer has been through the same situation and this can help the student to avoid making the same mistakes.
- Peers and students share a similar discourse, allowing for greater understanding.
- Forensic Science is a field of cross questions and interrogations and that's exactly what peer learning is about, learning through Trial and Error

## EVIDENCE OF SUCCESSFUL PEER LEARNING IN THE FIELD OF SCIENCE

- [4]Students in the Advanced Chinese Studies program, Intensive Chinese Language program, and Summer Intensive Chinese Language program at Peking University (PKU) in Beijing
  - students improved language skills
- The Peer Tutoring Program at Duke University in North Carolina
  - students and tutors improved mastery of subjects
- Carsrud (1984) describes an example of a surrogate teaching method in which doctoral students supervised undergraduate psychology students in conducting research projects.
  - students gained skills in research and report-writing
- The students who had engaged in peer learning scored significantly higher on the QRI (Quality Reading Inventory) test than the students who had not, indicating the effectiveness peer tutoring can have on academic achievement.
- [5]Peer discussion of in-class clicker questions at the University of Colorado-Boulder
  - after students began discussing questions with neighbors, more students selected the correct answer

## CONCLUSION

Peer learning is especially applicable to forensic science education; many of the students who are employed in the field of forensic science will need to testify in court. The learned skill of explaining scientific concepts to a jury with very little scientific background needs to be cultivated in students early in their career. If students begin this practise while at university, they will be more experienced at conveying complex ideas in a simple but accurate manner, which is critical to courtroom proceedings.

## REFERENCES

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 [3][http://www.investigacion-psicopedagogica.org/revista/articulos/13/english/Art\\_13\\_167.pdf](http://www.investigacion-psicopedagogica.org/revista/articulos/13/english/Art_13_167.pdf)  
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 [5]LA Manual

