**MUTUAL PEER TUTORING**

**PURPOSE**
Mutual Peer Tutoring pairs students together to explore a topic through a sequence of questions and responses. This method activates prior learning and expands the understanding of students. This tool outlines how to use this simple activity to deepen student learning.

**DESCRIPTION**
Mutual Peer Tutoring structures a questioning and answering interaction between two students.

This process is designed to:
- Review information
- Activate prior learning
- Explore the topic using higher order thinking skills
- Expand understanding through follow-up questioning
- Explore the thinking and questioning process that led to the learning

First, students are paired and given a role. One student takes the role of a questioner and the other takes the role of a respondent.

Second, you explain the roles and rules of interaction:
- Questioners can only ask questions—they are not allowed to make any commentary
- Responders should only respond—they cannot ask the other person questions
- Additional skills on listening, answering, and developing questions can be reviewed

Third, the questions are explained. The first leading question is developed by you. This structures and guides the subsequent conversation. The following list shows the initial question followed by several types of questions that are developed by the student questioner.

1. Structuring question (Instructor)
2. Deepening questions
3. Probing or hint questions
4. Questioning about the thinking and learning process

Once trained and given the structuring question, students are fairly self-directed as they work through a sequence of the four questions listed above. Follow-up questions can be asked at any time.

As students question one another, they often move forward in a four step process from reviewing information, to “pulling” insights from one another, to “pushing” each other’s thinking, and finally to reflecting on the learning process.

**EXAMPLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jon:</th>
<th>Kyle:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does the muscular system work?</td>
<td>Well, voluntary muscle is different from involuntary, so let’s start with the former…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could you give an example? I don’t yet see how…</td>
<td>Well, you’ve got to consider the different roles that the CNS plays relative to…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But then how can you compare… and why would…</td>
<td>Structuring question set by instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension statement</td>
<td>Deepening Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanded comprehension statement</td>
<td>Probing Question</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**INSTRUCTIONAL TOOL**

**OUTCOMES**

**ARCHITECTURE**

**PREPARE**

**TEACH ONE ANOTHER**

**PONDER/PROVE**

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**TIPS**

- **Utilize the structuring question.** The structuring question is critical to a successful outcome. Instructors need to think carefully about the learning outcomes and craft the structuring question accordingly.

- **Pair students appropriately.** Pair students with peers of similar ability.

- **Provide enough time.** Sufficient time needs to be given for students to move beyond reviewing material and engage in higher-level discussions.

- **Maintain the purpose.** Students should not slip into the expert role. The idea is for one student to help the other construct their own understanding by guiding them through the thought process, not by telling them “the answer.”

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**Questions examples**

**Structuring Questions:**

- What happened after...? Outline for me...? Discuss your understanding of...? Describe...?

**Deepening Questions:**

- Can you distinguish between ...? Can you provide an example of...? Explain/interpret...? Restate in your own words...? What do you think...? Why would...? Could you expand that...? Could you explain again...? How would this apply to...?

**Probing Questions:**

- How would you group...? How is this similar to or different from...? What are some of the problems with...? How would you defend the assertion that...? How effective is...? Predict...?

**Questions about thinking:**

- How did you conclude that...? What is the connection you see between...? How do you picture...? How do you remember...? What would be the best way to explain...?

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**Use periodically.** Students become better at this as they practice. It is important to persist with the method beyond the initial first or second times.

**PITFALLS**

- **Confusion of questions.** Students often confuse types of questions and the effect they should have in directing learning.

- **Impatience for answers.** The questioner will often not wait long enough for the respondent to think, rushing the respondent in their responses. This can have the effect of hindering the respondent’s learning and may force them to pass over better thinking for quicker thinking.

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**KEY ARTICLES**


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**OTHER RESOURCES**

- **PowerPoint Presentation for training students**

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08/18/16