



Editor's Notes

Crossing Boundaries: The Importance of Discussion

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Crossing Boundaries: The Importance of Discussion

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In a recent issue of *The American Scholar*, Mark Edmundson presented the argument that fostering disagreement in the classroom is an important way to “teach the conflicts.” He suggests that presenting two contrasting readings provides a better basis for an understanding of differing views, rather than expecting students to discuss one reading without another reading for comparison. Promoting discussion as the means to arrive at understanding – and learning – is what makes the role of the Peer Leader so powerful. Through the discussion of a problem, various viewpoints are shared, surfacing the differing ways people think to arrive at an answer.

Every student learns differently, and I believe a majority of people know this but what we do not know is how many different ways can a student learn and which one helps them learn the most. This statement was made by Yanira Garcia, a Peer Leader in mathematics at New York City College of Technology, reflecting on her experience attending the 2013 PLTLIS Conference. Accounting for different paths to solving a problem is shown with a diagram by Elina Yusufova, a Peer Leader in Chemistry at the City College of New York, incorporated in a flow chart on finding the limiting reagent, where three possible paths arrive at the same Verification Step (McWilliams et al., 2019, p. 59). Peer Leaders, all “good students,” learn that their way of thinking is not the only way to arrive at a solution. This theme, of differing ways of thinking, appears repeatedly in presentations, discussions, and papers about Peer-Led Team Learning.

In this, the fourth issue of *Advances in Peer-Led Learning*, new facets of the possibilities in peer-led learning are presented. Moving away from the STEM fields, PLTL is shown to aid students in English composition courses using philosophical texts (Hendrickson et al.), and the long-lasting effects of the experience of peer leading surfaces for training new building construction personnel (Pinkhasik). Innovation in using AI to create workbook problems is demonstrated (Fraiman et al.). Leadership qualities developed through peer leadership are compared to habits of successful leadership (Michael et al.). Community is built at Sacramento State where PALS are fostered (Akhavan et al.), literal and linguistic boundaries are crossed

(Carrera Hernandez) and interests are developed in higher aspirations (Baca). Discussion is key in selecting Peer Leaders (Daschbach et al.) and providing feedback at Washington University in St. Louis (Daschbach et al.). Various voices present attributes of the richness of the experience of peer leading (Valenzuela, et al.), and developing language to share the emotional commitment to PLTL proves multi-faceted, honing in on relationships (Dreyfuss et al.). There is strength in sharing viewpoints, discussion, and despite the many possible paths, arriving at solutions that strengthen participants and understanding.

References

Edmundson, M. (2024). Teach the conflicts. *The American Scholar*, Autumn 2024, 84-92.

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<https://shop.pltlis.org/index.php/product/facilitating-team-based-learning/>

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