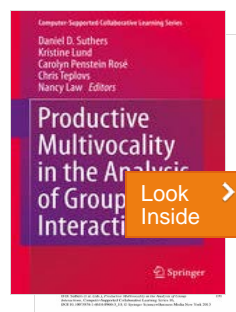


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Knowledge Building Discourse in Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL) Groups in First-Year General Chemistry

Keith Sawyer, Regina Frey, Patrick Brown



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Abstract

To better understand the interactional mechanisms that make PLTL effective, we closely examined videotapes of two PLTL groups as they both solved the same chemistry problem. In one group, students engaged in group knowledge building: intellectual conversations where they asked each other questions, provided procedural and conceptual explanations, and closely monitored each others' understanding of the problem. This led to an increasingly accurate understanding of the problem. In the contrasting group, their conversations focused on rote application of formulas as they worked to calculate a "correct" solution. Our analyses help us to understand what effective collaborative discourse looks like, and have practical implications for how peer leaders are trained and for how peer groups are organized.

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