



NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

The Trusted Expert and Internationally Recognized Leader
for all Postsecondary Student Transitions

Upgrade Your Peer Leader Program by Creating High-Impact and Transformative Experiences

Bryce Bunting, Brigham Young University
Tricia Kennedy, University of South Carolina
Dallin George Young, National Resource Center
for the First-Year Experience and Students in
Transition

Becoming Acquainted

- Brief intros at tables
 - Name
 - Institution
 - Role
 - How are you currently using Peer Leaders?
 - What do you hope to gain from this session?

Goals for the Workshop

1. Briefly introduce key research on Peer Leadership
2. Explore peer leadership as a High-Impact Practice
3. Identify the characteristics of high-impact and transformative PL experiences.
4. Discuss reflection as a pathway to a high-impact and transformative PL experience
5. Work collaboratively to develop strategies for improving the high-impact & transformative potential of PL experiences on our campuses.

Outline for the Session

- Benefits of Peer Leadership
- Peer Leadership as a High-Impact Practice
- Designing High-Impact and Transformative Peer Leadership Experience
- Reflection as a Pathway to a High Impact and Transformative Peer Leadership Experience
- Synthesis, Reflection, and Action

Defining Peer Leadership

“Students who have been **selected and trained** to offer educational services to their peers. These services are **intentionally designed** to assist in the adjustment, satisfaction, and persistence of students toward attainment of their educational goals, Students performing in [*these*] paraprofessional roles **are usually compensated** in some manner for their services and are **supervised by qualified professionals.**”

(Ender & Newton, 2000; Newton & Ender, 2010)

Defining Peer Leadership

“Peer Leader” as a comprehensive descriptor

- Student Ambassadors
- Orientation Leaders
- Resident Advisors
- Peer Mentors
- Peer Counselors
- Peer Academic Advisors
- Peer Educators (Tutors, SI Leaders, etc)

(Cuseo, 2010)



FAMILY FEUD

Peer Leadership



FAMILY FEUD

Top Benefits of Peer Leadership

Leadership skills

Giving back to university

Interpersonal skills

Making friends

Teamwork skills

Diverse perspectives



BACK



Benefits of Peer Leadership

Table Discussion:

What benefits have you observed or
heard from the peer leaders
on your campus?

Benefits of Peer Leadership

“The student’s peer group is **the single most potent source of influence** on growth and development during the undergraduate years.”

(Astin, 1993)

Benefits of Peer Leadership

Peers have a significant and profound impact on the undergraduate experience:

- Intellectual development
- Academic Engagement
- Moral Development
- Clarification of Political and Social Values
- Determination of Academic and Social Self-Concept
- Interpersonal Skills
- Critical Thinking Skills
- Positive Gains in Writing and Reading Comprehension

(Greenfield, Keup, & Gardner, 2013; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Skipper, 2005)

Definition of High-Impact Practices

- “Teaching and learning practices that have been **widely tested** and have been shown to **be beneficial for college students** from many backgrounds. These practices **take many different forms**, depending upon learner characteristics and on institutional priorities and contexts. [*HIPs are*] practices that educational research suggests **increase rates of retention and student engagement.**”

(Kuh, 2010)

10 High-Impact Practices

- ✓ First-Year Seminars and Experiences
- ✓ Common Intellectual Experiences
- ✓ Learning Communities
- ✓ Writing-Intensive Courses
- ✓ Collaborative Assignments & Projects
- ✓ Undergraduate Research
- ✓ Diversity/Global Learning
- ✓ Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- ✓ Internships
- ✓ Capstone Courses and Projects



High-Impact Practices

- ☒ First-Year Seminars & Experiences
- ☒ Common Intellectual Experiences
- ☒ Learning Communities
- ☒ Writing-Intensive Courses
- ☒ Collaborative Assignments & Projects
- ☒ Internships
- ☒ Undergraduate Research
- ☒ Diversity/Global Learning
- ☒ Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- ☒ Capstone Courses & Projects
- ☐ **Peer Leadership?**



Characteristics of High-Impact Practices

- Creates an investment of time and energy
- Includes interaction with faculty and peers about substantive matters
- Real-world applications
- High expectations
- Includes frequent feedback
- Exposure to diverse perspectives
- Demands reflection and integrated learning
- Demonstration of competence/Accountability

(Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013)

Results from 2013 National Survey of Peer Leaders

- Investment of Time and Energy
 - Total # of peer leader experiences
 - Time spent performing peer leader responsibilities
- High Expectations
 - Training
- Reflection and Integrated Learning/Frequent Feedback
 - Ongoing formal training
- Exposure to Diverse Perspectives
 - Interactions with people from different backgrounds
- Real-World Applications
 - Skill Development and Employability Outcomes

Investment of Time and Energy

Evidence of Engagement

- Half of all peer leaders have held 2-4 total PL positions
- Nearly half of all peer leaders spend 6-15 hours per week on PL duties

Over-Engagement?

- 1 in 10 have held 8 or more PL positions
- 17% reported spending 20 hours or more per week.
- Slightly more than 5% spend 30 or more hours per week.



High Expectations

Communicating Expectations through Training

- 85% of peer leaders received some training for their peer leader positions
- 4.5 in 10 reported training for one or more PL experience lasted one week or longer

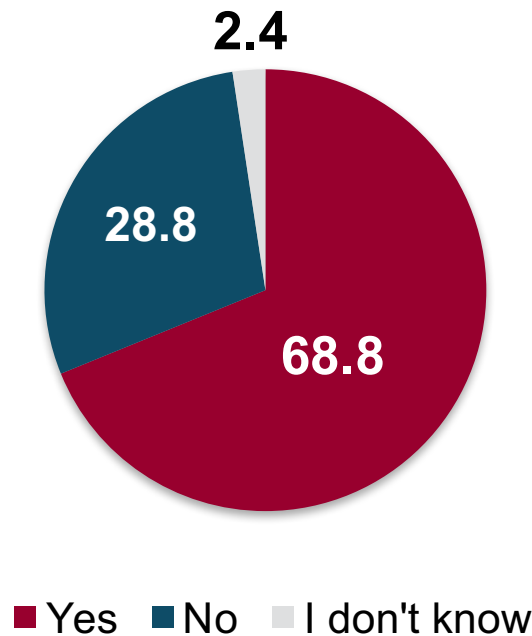
Expectations Unclear – Little or no Training

- 15% of peer leaders did not receive formal training for their positions
- 6 in 10 reported training for one or more PL experience was 2 days or shorter

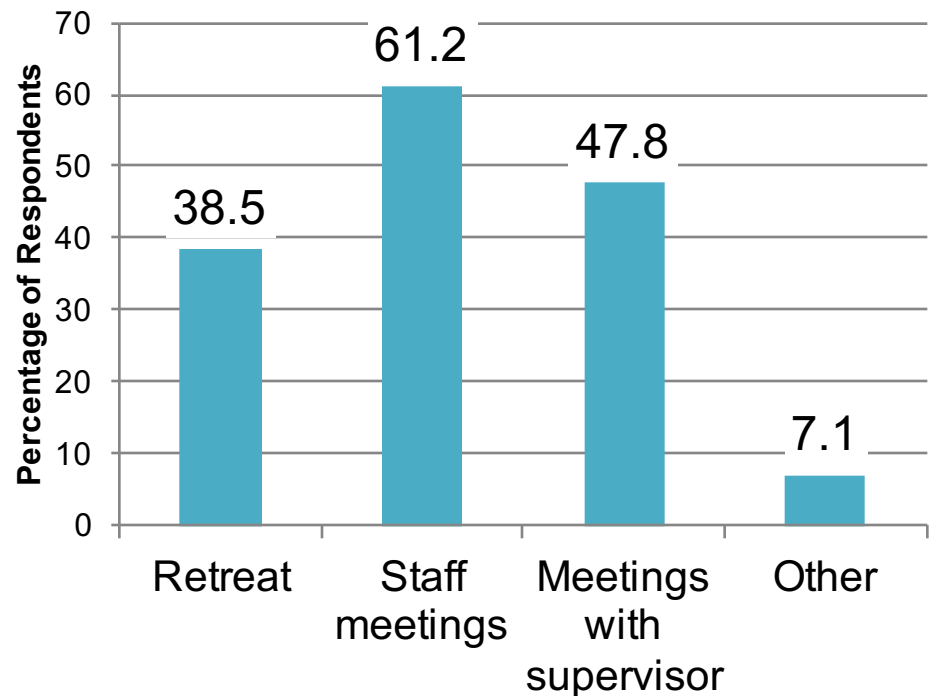


Reflection and Integrated Learning/ Frequent Feedback

Did you receive any additional ongoing formal training after the initial training? (n = 3,353)



What type of additional ongoing formal training did you receive? (n = 2,303)





Over 70%

of Peer Leaders reported increased:

- Interaction with
 - Understanding of
- people from backgrounds different from their own

Exposure to Diverse Perspectives

Over 80%

of Peer Leaders reported
increased skills in:

- Leadership
- Interpersonal communication



Over 70%

of Peer Leaders reported
increased skills in:

- Teamwork
- Time management
- Project management
- Organization



Real-World Application



Over 70%

of Peer Leaders
reported increased
employability outcomes:

- Building professional relationships
- Applying knowledge to a real-world setting
- Bringing together information from different places



Real-World Application

High-Impact Practices

- ☒ First-Year Seminars & Experiences
- ☒ Common Intellectual Experiences
- ☒ Learning Communities
- ☒ Writing-Intensive Courses
- ☒ Collaborative Assignments & Projects
- ☒ Internships
- ☒ Undergraduate Research
- ☒ Diversity/Global Learning
- ☒ Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- ☒ Capstone Courses & Projects
- ☒ **Peer Leadership?**



Break (9:05 – 9:20)



NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

www.sc.edu/fye

In their own words . . .

“When I became a peer mentor, **my whole academic focus changed**. . . . This was a very influential turning point for me. . . . I was able to **become the type of learner** that every college student has the responsibility to be.”

[Jennifer]

(Bunting, 2012, p. 67)



Table Discussion: *What does Transformative Learning look like?*

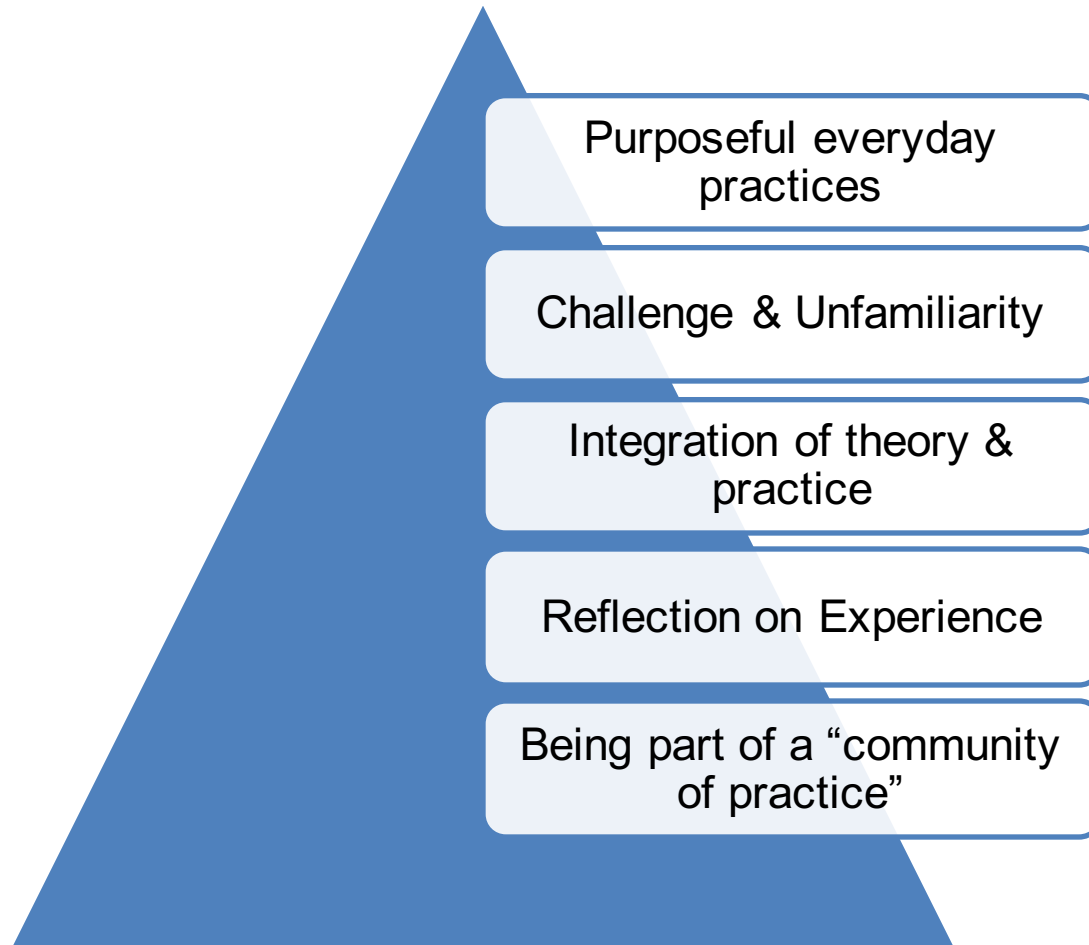
#1 Quick Write (1 min): Jot down a few notes about a transformative learning experience you've had.

*What made it so impactful?

#2 Discuss at Tables (5 minutes):

- What are the elements of a transformative learning experience?

A Framework for high-impact and transformative PL experience



#1 Purposeful “everyday” practices

Routines, habits, practices that, over time, contribute to transformative learning.

- Simple, consistent training exercises
- Regular documentation of student contact
- Meaningful administrative work (e.g. Answering incoming student phone calls)

e.g. practice exercise of the day/week; weekly reports; outbound calls to incoming first-year students

#2 Challenge & Unfamiliarity

Growth-promoting or disorienting experiences that . . .

- challenge PLs perspectives
- invite the adoption of new practices
- introduce new ways of thinking
- confront PLs with unfamiliarity or ambiguity

e.g. senior peer leader positions; readings that challenge assumptions; interactions w/ difficult students

#2 Challenge & Unfamiliarity

“Peer leadership asked me to do scary things. . . . I answered the phone in the office for the first time. I sought out a professor who hadn’t answered my emails. I spoke in front of a group of 50 people for the first time. **Now I know how to stare down fear in the face.**

Sometimes it still wins, but mostly I do.”

(Robyn)



#3 Integration of Theory & Practice

Intentionally designed interventions or experiences that . . .

- make theory concrete and “visible”
- invite PLs to connect theory & practice
- provide opportunities for application of theory

e.g. case studies; reflective writing; opportunities for senior PLs to design training for new PLs

#3 Integration of Theory & Practice

“The readings about general education really changed me. There were things in my life outside of peer leadership that the readings applied to and **having all of these things going on outside, and then in my peer leadership at the same time, changed me** to have a better understanding of what a leader is . . . and what an education really means.”
(Amelia)



#4 Reflection on Experience

Regular opportunities to reflect on the impact and meaning of peer leadership experiences

- Solidifies and clarifies learning
- Facilitates meaning-making
- Provides motivation and direction for future learning

e.g. journaling; observation of senior PLs; self-evaluation of recorded simulations; reflective dialogue w/ others

#4 Reflection on Experience

“Reflection is all about connections – connections to things we’ve learned, connections to emotions, and connections to experiences. **That’s why we write reflections—so that we can connect the leadership experiences we have to the things in our life** – because we realize that leadership will always be a part of our life.” (Kat)



#5 A “community of practice”

(Wenger, 1998)

A community that

- provides support & safety
- challenges PLs to stretch & become
- structures & guides learning
- provides models of effective leadership

e.g. peer leader “teams”; one-on-one meetings with faculty/staff supervisor; peer leader seminars



NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

www.sc.edu/fye

#5 A “community of practice”

(Wenger, 1998)

“Breck would constantly ask me ‘What do you think would happen if you did that?’ I loved that—I hated it, but I loved it at the same time because **it helped me so much in my teaching and my career** because you don’t always have someone to tell you what to do. It’s nice to have **someone that trusts you and who gives you feedback, but lets you try things.**” (Kat)



Designing High-Impact Learning Environments

Transformative Element	Examples
#1 Meaningful “Everydayness”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Daily/Weekly training routines• Regular documentation of student interactions• Weekly reports on work• Outbound/Inbound phone calls w/ first-year students
#2 Challenge & Unfamiliarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opportunities to engage resistant/apathetic students• Projects/assignments that facilitate development of new knowledge, skill, etc.• Readings that introduce challenging or unsettling ideas• Interactions w/ supervisors that “challenge” & invite growth• Senior peer leader opportunities

Designing High-Impact Learning Environments

Transformative Element	Examples
#3 Integration of Theory & Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Case studies• Reflection on how theory connects to and informs practice• Opportunities for senior PLs to design new PL training
#4 Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Written reflection (e.g. journaling)• Reflective discourse with peers/supervisors• Observation of senior PLs
#5 Community of Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical space that invites sharing of best practices, Qs, problems• Regular “community meetings”• Support & mentoring from other PLs/Supervisors• Senior peer leadership opportunities



Designing High-Impact Learning Environments



Reflection as a Pathway to High-Impact and Transformative Peer Leader Experience



Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory

(1984)

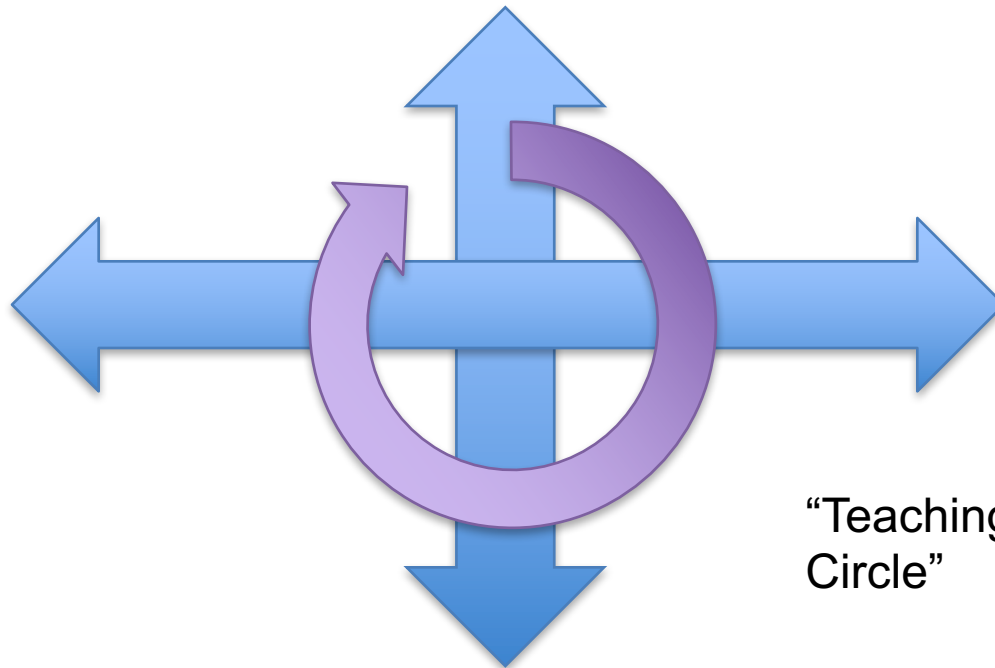
Concrete
Experience

Active
Experimentation

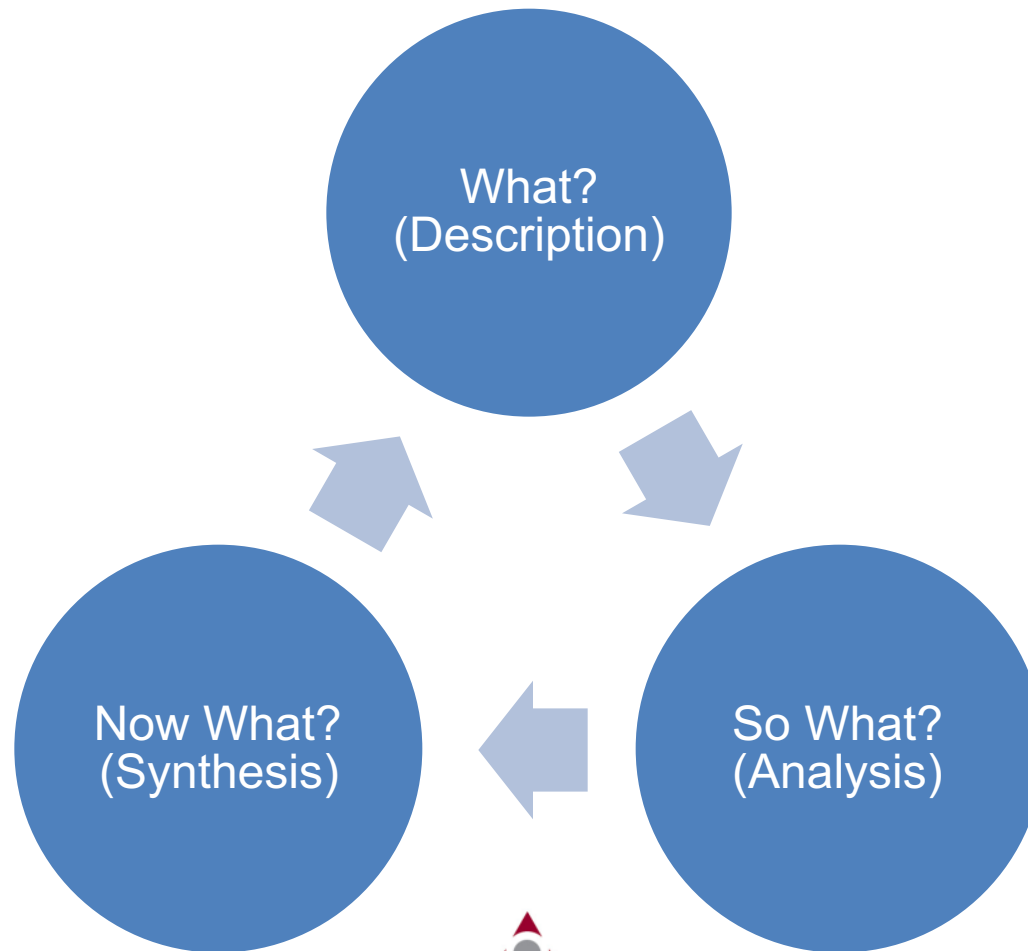
Reflective
Observation

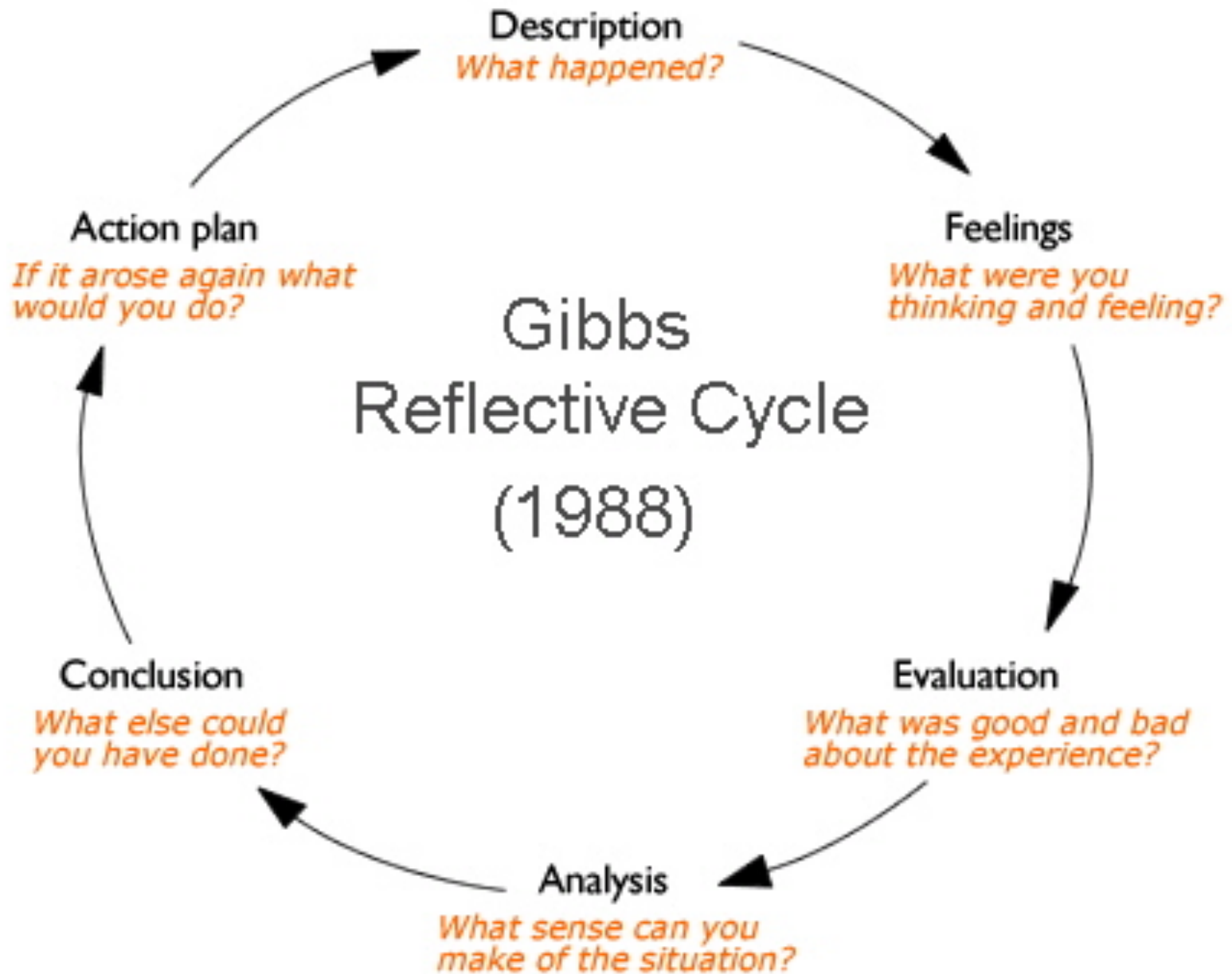
“Teaching Around the
Circle”

Abstract
Conceptualization

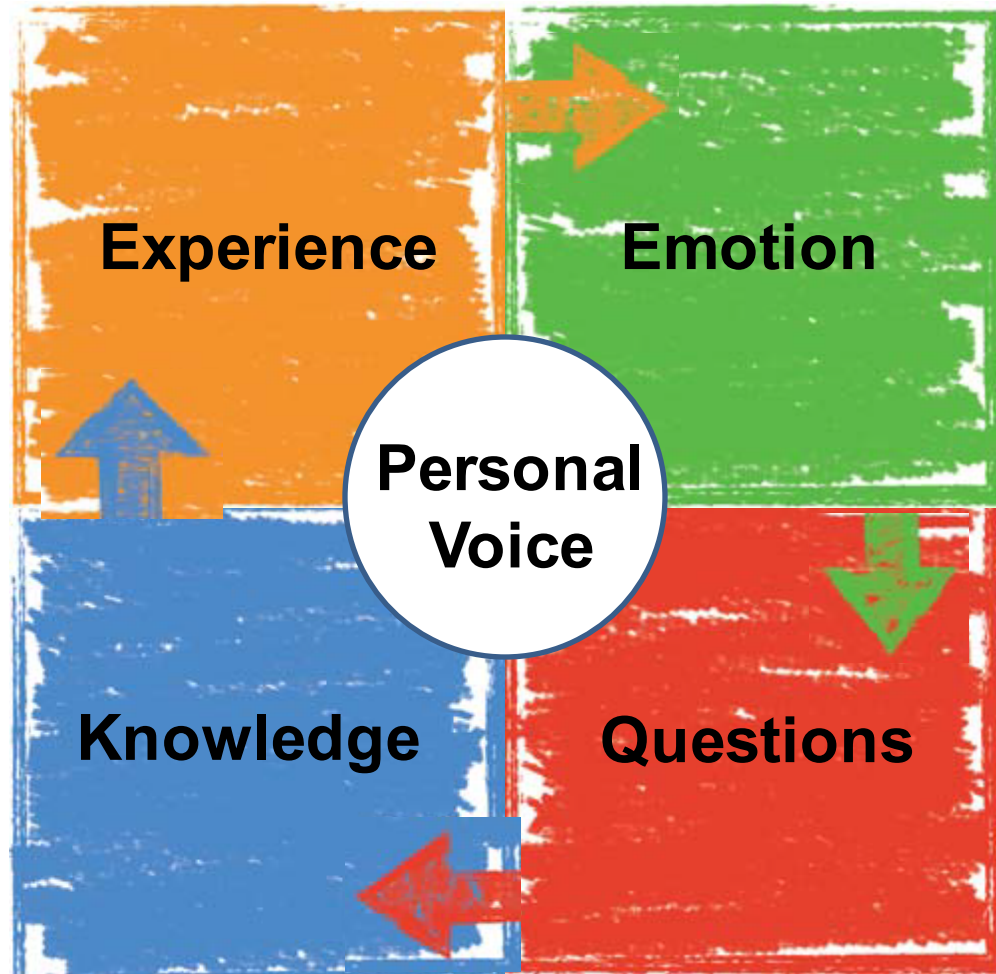


Borton's Model of Reflection (1970)





BYU's Reflection Model



Types of Reflection

☒ Individual

☒ 1:1

☒ Group

☒ Written

☒ Oral

☒ Creative



Let's Practice...



Sample Reflection Structures

- Concentric Circles
- Sentence Stems
- Free Association
- Journals
- Quotes
- Graffiti
- Bumper Sticker
- Think, Pair, Share
- Photo Reflections

Reed and Koliba. Facilitating Reflection: A Manual for Leaders and Educators. https://www.uvm.edu/~dewey/reflection_manual/
Sloane. Reflection Activities: Tried and True Teaching Methods to Enhance Students' Service-Learning Experience.

High Impact Peer Leadership

“While promising, **they are not a panacea.** Only when they are **implemented well** and **continually evaluated**...will we realize their considerable potential.”

– Kuh in Brownell & Swaner, 2010

Stop. Collaborate. Listen.

- What are the benefits you would like your PLs to have as a result of engaging in your program?
- When have you seen the PL experience have a transformative impact upon PLs on your campus?
- How do you know that students have gained those benefits?

Stop. Collaborate. Listen.

- What characteristics of HIPs could you leverage at your institution to provide a more impactful PL experience?
- What elements of the transformative PL experience framework could you adapt and apply to your work with PLs?

Designing High-Impact Learning Environments

Are you providing experiences that . . .

- ☒ include meaningful **everyday** (or regular) practices?
- ☒ leverage **challenge & unfamiliarity**?
- ☒ integrate **theory & practice**?
- ☒ offer frequent opportunities for **reflection**?
- ☒ involve PLs in a supportive **community of practice**?

Action Steps

- Write down 3 action steps that you are considering for your Peer Leadership program
- Review the sessions at the conference and identify those that appear to align with your action steps.
- (plan on attending those sessions...)

Group Discussion

- Questions
- Advice
- Tales from the road

