Advanced PBL Tutor Training: Organizing the PBL Return Session

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Introduction

• Whether you have taught PBL for 10 years or one year, this workshop will provide you with some ideas and tips for improving your organization of the return PBL session.

• This workshop is specially designed for the skills needed in conducting or facilitating the return session.
Common Statements About PBL Tutor Training

• "I have been teaching PBL for a long time—I don’t need this training."
• "I feel I am doing just fine teaching PBL and facilitating the return session on Fridays."
• "What am I going to learn that I don’t already know?"
• "Why should I want to participate in this workshop?"
Motivation/Rationale

• PBL is a unique teaching approach, requiring a specific skill set
• Facilitating the PBL return session requires organization
• Recent studies have shown that PBL faculty often struggle with the skills associated with the return session.
• We currently only offer limited, brief training about the skills needed to facilitate the return session to PBL faculty.
• It is important that busy faculty obtain (or brush up on) these skills from time to time.
• Students report that they want a more organized return session
• Everyone has room for improvement
Module Goal

Since every tutor brings their own style and approach to the PBL experience, this workshop is simply meant to provide you with some ideas, suggestions and strategies that will be useful to you when facilitating return sessions.
Objectives

Given video examples of actual small-group PBL encounters, at the end of this workshop, you will be able to integrate new and effective strategies on how to:

1. Launch the return session
2. Identify opportunities for feedback concerning student learning issues
3. Integrate learning issues into the discussion
4. End the return session
Rationale

• PBL is a unique teaching approach, requiring a specific skill set
• Facilitating the PBL return session requires organization
• Training faculty to teach PBL is challenging & limited
• Students want more organization from tutors during the return session
• Faculty struggle with skills needed to facilitate the return session
• Technology may help bridge the “training gap”
How do you organize a PBL return session?

- Do you start/end on time?
- What type of feedback do you give?
- Do you review Day 1 case materials?
- How much time per week do you spend reading learning issues and replying?
- How much feedback do you give students?
- How do you conclude the return session?
- How do you integrate LIs into the discussion?
So, how should a return session be organized and conducted?

1. Launching the return session
2. Identifying opportunities for feedback concerning student learning issues
3. Integrating learning issues into the discussion
4. Concluding the return session
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Skill #1: Launching the Return Session

- The tutor often sets the tone for the PBL experience. The beginning of the return or Friday session is no exception.
- The literature suggests that the act of reviewing the case information initially presented (on Monday) allows students time to reflect on the process of constructing new knowledge while resolving the case.
- Reviewing the parts of the case from day one also provides multiple opportunities for the integration of learning issues.
- Watch 2 video clips
Skill #1: Launching the Return Session

• **Question 1:** Which clip provided the better opportunity for students to integrate their learning issues with the initial patient discussion from day one of the case?

• **Question 2:** What can you do as a tutor in a return session to move students from information regurgitation to knowledge application?

• **Question 3:** What might you do as a tutor in clip #1 to make the beginning of the return session more reflective?
Skill #1 Feedback: Launching the Return Session

Clip 1: This clip shows a tutor taking one student's word that he understood all the previous case information. A quieter or shy student may not speak up or admit they are unclear about something. More gregarious students may end up speaking for the group. The tutor also begins the session by reading the case, which may establish her in a dominant role as the leader, rather than as a facilitator for self-directed learning.

Clip 2: The tutor begins the return session by calling attention to the flip chart postings from day one, asking students to reflect on their new understanding of the case given their learning issues and weekly didactics. The tutor also returns to the class postings for review of the facts, differential diagnosis and action plan. Where was their misunderstanding the greatest? This review creates opportunities for the integration of student learning issues and areas of clarification.
Skill #1 Strategies: Launching the Return Session

Strategy 1:
- Return to the class postings from day one (facts, Dx and action plan) before introducing the new parts of the case.
- Go down the list generated by students, and using their new knowledge from learning issues and weekly didactics, place a + or - sign next each differential diagnosis.
- This will open up the discussion right away, creating opportunities for learning issues and reflection.

Strategy 2:
- Ask one student to act as the "chief resident" for the case.
- This student will "present" the case, as they would on rounds with an attending.
- The student will "run" the case and will call on the other students throughout the discussion.
- This maintains student accountability and self-directed learning.
- Every week a new student will be the "chief resident", but wait to assign this role until the return session.
So, how should a return session be organized and conducted?

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Skill #2: Identifying opportunities for feedback about student learning issues

- Although tutors are supposed to provide students with feedback about their online postings and during a mid-block evaluation, students often state feedback is inconsistent, variable and not enough.
- Feedback provided during the return session can take on many forms - brief, simple, positive and/or constructive.
- *Explaining why* something is "important", "perfect" or "off-track" will enable students to make connections between the learning issue and the content of the case. These are teachable moments.
- For example, explaining why it is important to listen to the heart in multiple locations during a physical exam may "spark" discussion and opportunities for learning issues.
Skill #2: Identifying opportunities for feedback about student learning issues

- Watch videos

**Question 1:** Which clip illustrates a better example of giving a student feedback about their learning issue, prompting further discussion?

**Question 2:** What can you do as a tutor in a return session to promote deeper, more meaningful opportunities for feedback to students about their learning issues?

**Question 3:** What might you do as a tutor in clip #2 to improve the feedback given to the student?
Skill #2 Feedback: Identifying opportunities for feedback about student learning issues

Clip 1 provides an example of a tutor calling attention to a student's posting and bringing it into the discussion. The tutor's feedback may be subtle but demonstrates to the student that she reads their postings, finds the information important and integrates it into the return session. This strategy sends a message of accountability to both the student and the tutor - students should post accurate and relevant information; tutors should read and respond to the information posted.

Clip 2 shows a tutor reacting to a student who wants to comment on a particular topic by saying "No, not you". This comment can send the wrong message to a student, such as, "You've done too much talking already" or "You've done such a good job already I'd like someone else to talk". Although this is feedback to the student, it is ambiguous and is open to interpretation. It is important as a tutor to be clear and direct with your feedback.
Skill #2 Strategies: Identifying opportunities for feedback about student learning issues

Strategy 1:
- Always follow up praise or criticism with an explanation with WHY something was "good", "incorrect", "well-done", or "inaccurate".
- Providing students with the logic behind your feedback offers insight into the critical reasoning process going on in your head, and provides a clear understanding for the student of the remarks you made.
- The exception to this is if a student needs a private consultation because of something grossly inappropriate, embarrassing or disruptive.

Strategy 2:
- Use information from the student's postings during the discussion as a form of feedback.
- This demonstrates to the student that you have read their postings and find it worthy of further discussion.
So, how should a return session be organized and conducted?

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Skill #3: Integrating learning issues into discussion

- Identifying areas in the discussion during the return session where a learning issue would fit takes practice and experience.
- The tutor often facilitates the smooth transition of learning issues into the discussion, thus enhancing meaningful dialogue among the group.
- Integrating learning issues in novel ways (such as revisiting an issue later on during the session or reframing an issue by asking a student to discuss, for example, how a particular disease might present differently in a woman/infant/elderly patient) creates opportunities for students to make new connections to the (differential) diagnoses.
Skill #3: Integrating learning issues into discussion

• Watch the video clips
• Which clips has more impact on the group’s discussion, and why?
• What can you do as a tutor to promote the integration of student learning issues into the case discussion rather than allow student-led mini-lectures?
• What might you do in clip #1 to improve the integration of the student's learning issue?
Skill #3 Feedback: Integrating learning issues into discussion

**Clip 1** illustrates a student giving a mini-lecture and just reading her learning issue off a piece of paper. No one is engaged in the discussion, nor does the tutor ask any questions encouraging deeper dialogue. This approach does not help the group resolve the case nor does it add anything to the discussion.

**Clip 2** demonstrates one way to integrate a student learning issue when the group is at an impasse. The tutor asks the group's "expert" to give his opinion or impression about the hippocampus in the brain image. The "expert" could be called upon to teach the group about a specific topic rather than giving a "book report" on this topic.

**Clip 3** depicts an excellent way to reintegrate a learning issue. The tutor reframes the learning issue for a more stimulating discussion by asking the student to justify his knowledge by stating aloud how one would fake MS in a physician's office. The student has to think about all the symptoms of MS and whether they could be "acted out" or not. This strategy forces a student to apply his knowledge in a new way, helping to deepen learning.
Skill #3 Strategy: Integrating learning issues into discussion

- Another novel idea for integrating student learning issues into the return session discussion is asking students to report on another student's learning issue.
  - This ensures everyone has read each other's learning issue prior to coming to class, prompts accountability and opens up dialogue between the reporter and investigator of that learning issue.
  - Don't tell students in advance which learning issue they will report on. Make the random selections during the return session.
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Skill #4: Concluding the return session

Allowing time at the end of the return session for students to reflect on the entire case, the entire week's learning and the group process, provides closure and an opportunity for clarification. The tutor is instrumental in facilitating this learning element.
Skill #4: Concluding the return session

• Watch video clips
• Do you think the strategy in clip #3, raising a core or essential question for student reflection, is an effective way to conclude the return session? Why or why not?
• What can you do as a tutor in the return session to summarize the case and check for understanding?
• What might you do as a tutor to improve the conclusion of the return session in clip #2?
Skill #4 Feedback: Concluding the return session

Clip 1 depicts one way for a tutor to end a return session - encouraging dialogue about the group's dynamic and noting student comments. It is important that each student is asked this question directly so misconceptions and confusion can be cleared up. Through this line of questioning, effective group learning can be improved and maintained, greatly enhancing the PBL experience for all.

Clip 2 illustrates a return session loosing steam and fizzling out. The tutor makes no closing remarks, posits any questions or suggestions. There is no sense of closure to the case or the session. Simply presenting students a question to ponder (i.e., what if this happened to you?) as they leave the room can impact learning past the end of the return session.

Clip 3 is an example of a tutor summing up the case using one core question. He talks about the "range of issues" raised during the discussion, which also systematically provides a sense of closure and reflection. Students leave the session with a "road map" of where they started initially on day one of the case and where they have arrived by the end of return session.
Skill #4 Strategies: Concluding the return session

- Script a question or two before the start of return session that encompasses the essence of the case. Students can ponder this question and respond to it either at the end of the return session or at a later time.
- Although not always possible, leave 5 minutes at the end of each return session to ask students if they are clear about the diagnosis and how the group came to understand the information leading up to the diagnosis and action plan.
The Return Session Outline

1. Launching the return session
2. Identifying opportunities for feedback concerning student learning issues
3. Integrating learning issues into the discussion
4. Concluding the return session
PBL Tutor Online Training Study
2006
Training Evaluation
(Blocks 4, 5 & 8)
This training taught me new skills I can use when facilitating the return session
This training gave me new ideas about how to facilitate the return session

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
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91%
This training was worth the time spent

- Strongly Disagree: 1
- Disagree: 0
- Agree: 7
- Strongly Agree: 3

91%
I would recommend this training to other PBL tutors or block chairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
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Online is an effective medium for learning or brushing up on my teaching skills

- Strongly Disagree: 1
- Disagree: 1
- Agree: 3
- Strongly Agree: 6

81.25%
The use of video brings authenticity to PBL training.
What one strategy do you see yourself using immediately?

• Trying to reach a stronger conclusion for each case.
• Assigning a "case manager" to restate the hx and lead parts of the discussion.
• Asking student to be "Chief resident" and present cases to each other
• Always orderly discussion of a learning issue and its relation to the case. **Expanding the case** by altering, removing or adding new information.
• Using the chief resident approach
• How to conclude and interact.
• **Doing the overview** at the beginning; appointing a chief resident; having students present other LIs; trying to figure out a question for closure
• Questioning key issues at the end of a session
• Preparing a couple of closing questions/comments to encourage the session ending on a reflective, upbeat note.
• Improving on summarizing the essential/core learning issue at the end
• I'll ask students whether and how they accomplished the learning goals.
What was the most helpful part of this module?

- Seeing a really great teacher in action - actual video of how it is done.
- The "tip sheet"
- It reinforced they way i teach
- Comparing the styles in different clips used to emphasize a point by way of pointing to contrast
- Skill #3-Integrating learning issues into Friday's case discussion
- 1, 3, 4 (Launching the return session, Integrating learning issues into Friday's case discussion, and Concluding the return session respectively)
- Watching an effective tutor
- The discussion of alternatives for working the learning issues with the students.
- Partly, it validates practices I have been using in the second session. But these have taken me years to come to, so this will be especially helpful to less experienced tutors, and/or those who are on the wrong track. It did suggest a few extra wrinkles for me to try. Also, the length of the lesson was about right.
- Seeing video clips of session not going as well and plan on strategies ending the case
- Specific tips and video examples
PBL Faculty Interviews

- Training took ~30 minutes to complete
- Completed in one sitting
- Majority completed the training at work, one reported doing it at home
- Time-efficient
- Most had no technical difficulties
- Several reported using the “chief resident” approach, random learning issue approach, case review and reflective questioning
- Most felt the training would be best used with novice PBL tutors
## Student Focus Groups

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<th>Control Group</th>
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<td>• Wide variability with regards to return session organization (compared with other blocks and other groups within the same block)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Few report case review</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Limited to non-existent feedback, unstructured, informal, moderately useful.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Students want more</td>
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<td>• Learning issues were integrated into case discussion in some groups. Half the students reported a round-robin approach-not useful in case resolution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Only one student reported time for reflection or a sense of closure</td>
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<td>- Students want structured time to assess their learning</td>
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<tr>
<th>Experimental Group</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• More organizational consistency within same block</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Wide variability between other blocks</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Most report case review is standard</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Feedback is more frequent and comes in many forms (group, individual, face-to-face, online, written, verbal, constructive and positive)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Learning issues integrated in artful and novel ways (chief resident and random LI approaches reported)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- This was not always perceived as positive by the students</td>
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<td>• Most still do not feel a sense of closure at the end of the case</td>
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Student Evaluation Data

The tutor provided useful feedback to the students, individually and as a group, during Friday’s session.
Control Groups vs Treatment Group

The tutor provided useful feedback to the students, individually and as a group during Friday’s session.
Thank you

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