The In's & Out's of Supplemental Instruction: A Leader's Perspective

Contents:

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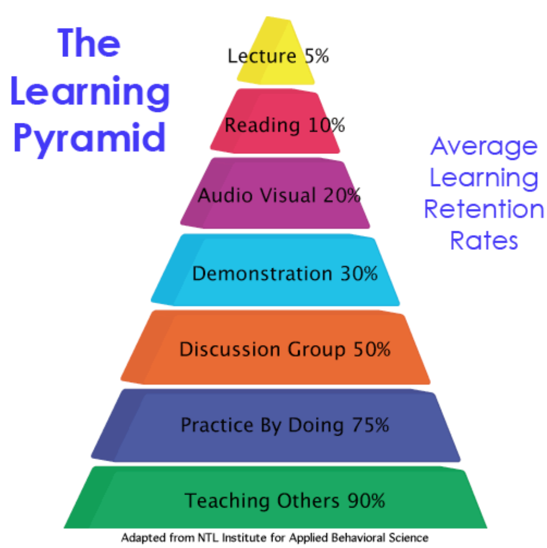
Study Smarter!

What is Supplemental Instruction?

Supplemental Instruction is a program instituted at universities nationwide, and students who participate regularly throughout the semester have been found, statistically, to have greater success rates in the course for which SI is offered. SI is offered in those classes that have high rates of enrollment and high rates of D's, F's, or withdrawals. At the University of Vermont, the courses with which SI is affiliated have traditionally been large lecture classes in the sciences and Economics.

The program's success hinges on the merits of targeted practice and review of class material and the increased level of engagement with this material that communication within small-group study provides. SI leaders attend lecture and take notes along with students, then prepare two, hour-long review sessions each week that focus on key skills and concepts presented. The sessions are further beneficial for students, however, in that they often incorporate valuable study skills, techniques, or strategies within practical applications of the course material. In addition to fostering collaborative learning, that which is most effective in terms of retention of new knowledge, the program integrates how to learn with what to learn.

Supplemental Instruction Leaders work within the peer-tutoring model embraced by the Learning Co-op. As students, they have taken the course for which they are leading SI (or an appropriate equivalent) and received a minimum grade of a B+. In addition, each leader must receive a recommendation by the faculty in the department ensuring their knowledge of the material. Often, SI Leaders have previously worked and continue to work as Subject-Area tutors in this discipline with the Learning Co-op.



Why Does it Work?

Active learning promotes a far greater level of retention than traditional forms of passive learning, like attending lecture. Actually working through problems and providing assistance to others in a group study setting is invaluable in the process of mastering new course material. This is why SI is so useful for large lecture classes!

What Do I Have to Do?

Leading Supplemental Instruction requires a substantial time commitment and dedication. SI Leaders are expected to:

- Attend Supplemental Instruction Leader training
- Attend all class meetings of selected course
- Act as a model student
- Schedule and conduct two, 50-minute study sessions each week
- Hold office hours each week
- Prepare materials and plan each session
- Make in-class announcements and distribute surveys
- Collect and submit contact data for ***ALL*** SI sessions (take attendance at all sessions, distribute end-of-semester evaluations, etc.)
- Maintain close contact with students, professors, and supervisors

The Purpose of an SI Leader:

- To reinforce what students have been learning in class.
- To create a comfortable atmosphere for teamwork and group study.
- Integrate how to learn with what to learn.
- To encourage good study habits and serve as a resource for students.
- Act as a model student.
- Support faculty members.

What are SI Leaders are *NOT* Supposed to Do?

- Tell students what questions will be on the test.
- Put in a good word with the professor, or change a student's grades.
- Explain entire chapters right before an exam because students have been procrastinating.
- Criticize a particular professor or style.

What Does my Supervisor Do?

Much of the SI Leader's role is completed independently; you attend classes by yourself, generate your own review materials, and set the schedule for review sessions. However, it is imperative that you remain in close communication with your supervisor throughout the semester. During the first week of classes, and once your SI session schedule is set, you will need to schedule regular meetings with your supervisor throughout the semester.

At the start of the term, your supervisor will be in charge of locating and reserving classrooms in which you will hold your sessions. Before you may proceed, you must check-in with the supervisor and have your schedule approved. Once your schedule has been set, the supervisor will help you to produce advertisement materials, but it will be up to you to ensure these materials are thoroughly distributed.

You should always be in close contact with the Professor of the course for which you are leading SI, but if there are ever problems with the communication in this area, your supervisor is a great resource. If you get stuck, are having poor attendance, or need any other feedback, your supervisor is always there to help!

Behind the scenes, the SI Supervisor is responsible for identifying which classes will support SI each semester, gaining faculty support and raising faculty awareness, selecting, training, and coordinating SI leaders, monitoring sessions, ensuring all necessary paperwork and documentation has been submitted correctly, and evaluating the program.

How Do I Interact With the Professor?

Treat the Professor as your ally, not your adversary. This means you

Should… …and… ***Should not:***

Should…

- Meet with the professor during their office hours to clear up any uncertainties your have about the material.
- Provide the instructor with feedback about how the sessions are going.
- Show the professor the handouts you have made to share with the students in SI. They can help make your handouts more appropriate to the course material.
- Ask permission to make announcements to the class and ask for their advice on how to best remain in contact with students. The professors like to stay involved and can be an amazing resource for you. If they support SI, it's more likely that their students will, too.
- Be helpful to the professor whenever possible, such as in the passing out of handouts or the returning of exams.

Should not:

- Criticize the professor during an SI session. It is unprofessional and unhelpful; students are responsible for their academic work regardless of the professor's style.
- Grade papers or tests, or be involved in creating graded items.
- Set yourself up as a teacher; you're job is to facilitate, not to re-lecture.
- Hesitate to refer the professor to the SI Supervisor for more clarification.
- Answer questions the professor poses to the class or involve yourself in classroom discussions unless the professor directly invites you to do so.

What would you do if…

- The Professor asks you to do something the SI Supervisor has asked you not to do, such as lecture during a time when they will be absent?
- The professor offers to show you items from an upcoming exam?
- The professor asks you not to pass out old exams in SI, and a student brings one to your SI session?
- The professor asks you to distribute handouts during class?
- The professor wants to know which students have been attending SI Sessions?
- The professor asks for feedback about content-related difficulties the students are experiencing?

How Do I Interact with Students?

The key to a successful semester of SI is attendance, and the key to attendance is communication!

The relationships SI Leaders have with their students are critical to the success of SI. Above all, students should always feel welcomed, accepted, and encouraged by the SI Leader. A good SI Leader should be a friendly and familiar face in the classroom, and the stronger the relationships you have with your students are, the more productive your sessions will be. Effective communication takes work, but it is absolutely necessary to Supplemental Instruction! Devise a plan to stay in touch, either making regular announcements in class or sending weekly emails to the students. Keep SI on the forefront of students' minds, and they will be more likely to take advantage of the opportunity to attend.

To build productive relationships with students, follow these basic Do's and Don'ts:

DO:

- Say "yes" to students' requests whenever reasonably possible to do so.
- Remember that the goal of SI is more than to simply help students get a good grade on the exam. There are many things that contribute to a successful semester, and many skills that can be transferrable to later courses.
- Recognize the limits of your job description and training. Some problems may be beyond your ability to address, but part of how you became successful as a student was knowing who to ask for help; share this knowledge with your students.
- Attempt to treat all students as you would treat a friend.
- Provide straightforward, truthful advice.
- Give and expect to receive respect.

DON'T:

- Allow yourself to be drawn into an argument with students. Even if they are clearly wrong, "asking for it," or start it first.
- Demand that students have to defend themselves to you. For instance, if they miss a session, act concerned but don't demand an explanation.
- Say anything that would make you sound like a parent, teacher, or authority figure of any kind.
- Feel obligated to fix problems that students create and can solve for themselves. Just remember to be diplomatic when you must decline the invitation to get involved.

Referring Students…

You can't have the answer to every question, and some situations you encounter may be way beyond your expertise. If you are ever uncomfortable or feel as though a problem is too big for you, you can always come to the SI Supervisor for guidance. There are other resources on campus as well, be it other forms of tutoring in the Learning Co-op, another office or department on campus, an RA, or the counseling center.

How would you refer students in the following situations?

1. Someone broke into my car and stole my ipod."
2. "English is my second language and I am having difficulty following the lectures."
3. "One of my TA's keeps coming on to me!"
4. I'd like to get involved in some campus activity."
5. "My father recently passed away."
6. "I have a learning disability."
7. "I can' t ever study in my room; I really just don't get along with my roommate!"

Some Important UVM Phone Numbers:

- Counseling Center: 656-3340/656-0784
- Women's Center: 656-7892
- Student Health Center: 656-3350
- ALANA Student Center: 656-3819
- The Learning Co-op: 656-4075
- Police Services: 911 or 656-3473
- ACCESS: 656-7753
- FAHC ER: 847-2434
- LGBTQA: 656-8637

Tips and Techniques to Leading a Successful Session:

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1. **BE PREPARED!** SI Leaders attend class in order to stay current with the material being covered in lecture. You will learn that, like bears, students can smell fear. Or at least, they are annoyed if they feel you are taking too long to answer a question or are not adequately prepared for a session. Regardless of the reason for their dissatisfaction, an unhappy student is unlikely to return to SI. If you have communicated what will be covered in each session and come with specific material to cover, students will know what to expect and will be less likely to leave feeling as though they have wasted their time. If you want to be prepared, you will need to:

-Attend class and be completely up-to-date with your notes.

-Do enough homework/practice problems that you feel confident with the material to be covered in your next session.

-Choose specific problems to cover in your session and do them ahead of time. Make sure you know the answers in and out. Believe me, the students will NEED to know each tiny detail. If there is anything you are unsure of, ask the professor. They are usually more than happy to help.

-Make enough copies and devise a plan for distributing answer keys.

-Be sure you leave time to wrap-up your session, allowing students to ask last-minute questions and let everyone know what you plan to work on next time. No one wants to feel rushed out the door…

2. **COMMUNICATE** with the students in the class, the professor, and your supervisor. Though you may introduce yourself at the beginning of the semester, chances are students will forgot about SI if they haven't attended during the first few weeks of class. Talk to the professor about setting up a regular way to communicate with students, be it a weekly email or announcement in class. Let students know when and where you'll be meeting, but also what you plan to cover in the next session. If they know what to expect, or know you'll be covering a topic that's giving them problems, they'll be more likely to try out SI for the first time, and may end up coming regularly. Be sure to advertise exam review sessions and put it an extra plug right after exams are returned when students tend to be more receptive to opportunities for help.

3. **BE ENGAGING!** You are a student just like those (hopefully) crowding your SI sessions. You don't have to dress in tweed or listen to public radio like a professor. So relax, and feel comfortable getting to know the students who come to your sessions. You don't write their exams or grade their papers; your sole purpose is to make a hard class more manageable for them. Crack a joke every now and then (appropriate, of course), use silly analogies to explain material, and get to know everyone's name. Going around the room for introductions may take some time, but it is worth it to set a relaxed tone in your sessions.

4. **REPETITION IS KEY.** Mastery of material comes from repeated practice. Think back on how it was that you were successful in this course when you took it as a student. You probably holed up in the library with your book and went through an entire ream of paper working through practice problems. The work you do with your students in SI should mirror this approach. I find it most effective to bring three versions of the same problem to a session. Work through one of them as a large group, giving an example of how to solve this type of problem. Allow the students to work in small groups on the next, and leave the last example for them to try on their own at home.

Suggestions from Past Leaders:

(Use this space to write down any useful hints you learn from veteran leaders in our meeting.)

How Do I get Paid?

UVM employees are paid every other week. I will send out an email reminder the Thursday before payroll closes, which is Sunday night at midnight. You will enter your hours on PeopleSoft and, if all of the necessary paperwork has been turned in by the time I approve time, you will receive a check the following Friday.

What is this "necessary paperwork" of which you speak?" you may ask. Before I approve your time, I will need to receive a signed and completed ***Work Summary Report*** listing each of the tasks for which you will be getting paid. Additionally, you will need to turn in your ***attendance sheets*** for each SI session during that pay period. If I do not receive this paper work, I will not approve your time. Just leave them in my mailbox in the Learning Co-op no later than 12 on the Monday following my reminder email.

To enter your hours on People Soft, you will need to go to catalyst.uvm.edu. Once there, do the following:

1. Log in under "Human Resources" using your UVM NetID and password
2. Once you've logged in, click on "Self Service" in the menu on the left side of the screen
3. Under "Self Service," click on "Time Reporting"
4. Under "Time Reporting," click on "Report Time"
5. Under "Report Time," click on "Timesheet"
6. Now, if you are working multiple campus jobs, you'll need to select your tutoring job at the learning co-op out of a list. Just look for Patience to be listed as your employer and you should be set. Click on your learning co-op job and then you'll be taken to the timesheet. If you are working only one campus job, once you click on "Timesheet" you'll be here.
7. Enter in your hours under the days that you worked. Remember that time needs to be entered in portions of an hour. So, if you worked for an hour and a half, you would enter 1.5 not 1.3.
8. Once you've entered in your hours for a given week, you would click on the "Time Reporting Code" drop-down menu and select either "Work Study Earnings" if you are using work study money or "Temporary Employee" if you are earning wages.
9. Under "Combo Code," click on the box with the magnifying glass icon to look up your combo code. If you are working multiple campus jobs, there will be multiple combo codes. Just guess and check until you find the right one. The system will tell you whenever you pick the wrong one, so it's pretty easy. If you are only working one campus job, there is only one combo code. So, just click it and it should work.
10. Click "Submit"

If you are entering hours for a week other than the current one, you can click "Previous Week" to move back in the schedule or you can click on the calendar icon next to the date to jump to a day in the calendar.

UVM sends checks to only one location on campus. If you have another job on campus, your check may continue to come there but if you do not, your check will be delivered to the Learning Co-op. You have a "mailbox" in a filing cabinet where your checks will be deposited. You can pick them up any time the Learning Co-op is open.

How Do I Keep Records of My Sessions?

Keeping accurate records is of the utmost important as an SI Leader. Thankfully, it is not too hard to do. All you need to do is ***take attendance at each and every SI session you hold***. Students will need to sign in with their name and student ID number. They will also need to specify which section of class they are enrolled in, such as A or B. If they do not know for sure, ask them to specify what day and time they have class, or what their professor's name is. It is necessary to know the course section in order to locate and track the students in our data system.

Please be sure all students sign-in, and that they write legibly. Some one from our office will enter the contacts using our record program, TutorTrac, so they need to be able to discern each name on the contact sheet. Please take the time during your session to ensure each and every student has signed in, and that you can read their name before you hand in your attendance sheets to me.

Students may also come to you during your scheduled office hours in the Learning Co-op. Be sure to ask the student to sign in to TutorTrac at the kiosk in the lobby of the Learning Co-op. If you need help signing the student in, please come find me in my office and ask for assistance. We need to be sure to keep records of these contacts, as well!

Training Checklist:

Administrative Paperwork:

- ☐ Completed I-9
- ☐ Completed W-4
- ☐ Learning Co-op Employee Information Form
- ☐ UVM Temporary Employee Payroll Form

Training:

- ☐ Attend Training Session
- ☐ Schedule Regular Check-In Dates with Supervisor

Preparing for the First Day of Class:

Before the First Day:

- ☐ Fill out time survey will your availability. Make copies for the students in your class.
- ☐ Contact Professor to introduce your self and schedule a time to distribute time surveys.
- ☐ Discuss with Professor a procedure to maintain regular communication with the students; via email, class announcements, or another method.
- ☐ Obtain a copy of the text book (ask Professor and SI Supervisor for assistance).
- ☐ Prepare and practice a five-minute introduction to SI for the students.

First Day of Class:

- ☐ Introduce self to class.
- ☐ Deliver five-minute presentation to class.
- ☐ Explain and distribute time survey.
- ☐ Write name and contact information on the board.

After the First Day:

- ☐ Sort data from time surveys and determine SI meeting times.
- ☐ Request rooms for SI meeting times with SI Supervisor.
- ☐ Prepare for first SI session and check-in with SI Supervisor.