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BY M. LEE MOUNTAIN

THE SPEED DATING ROUTE TO STUDY BUDDYING

D“Professor, I went speed dating!” Susie, a lively preservice teacher announced. “It was fun. Do you know how speed dating works?”

“I’ve never done it,” I hastened to tell her, “but I’ve seen it on TV. Don’t you get a bunch of strangers together in a meeting room and have them change seats every few minutes so they have to speed through get-acquainted talks with each other?”

“That’s the general idea,” said Susie, “but it was really structured. There were 12 guys and 12 gals. Each of 12 stations in the room had two chairs and a table. The guys remained at the stations, but every five minutes the gals rotated to the next station to talk with another guy. At the end of an hour, after twelve short conversations, each person filled out a ballot, naming the four people who’d be the best talkers on a real date.”

“Something tells me you met a guy who was a very good talker,” I observed.

Susie grinned and nodded. “He’s a business major. He said it’s too close to exam time for a dinner and movie date, so we decided on a study buddy date Friday.”

“How will that work?”

“After coffee and chatting a few minutes, we’ll

pull out notes for our finals and recite to each other. Not romantic, but ever so practical. And after finals, who knows . . .” Susie danced away, thoughts of happily-ever-after floating through her head.

My thoughts? Finals were close, and I had planned a class period for reviewing. Why not use the procedures of speed dating and study buddying in class for my students’ review? In five-minute conversations, they could recite back and forth to each other from the study questions I’d given them. At the end of the period, each student could vote for the four people who were the most helpful study buddies. I could give the winners some bonus points on the exam.

I tried it, and the results made a convert of me. The speed dating connection intrigued the students. Most of them arrived with notes, ready to talk. Of course, a few slackers arrived unprepared, but the worst slacker made the most positive comment, “When I had to recite an answer back to a partner at every station, some of the content sank into my brain.”

That is what reviewing is all about, so the speed dating route to study buddying worked. And Susie was right—it is fun! It’s an instructional method I’m now using in all my classes. Whether you teach middle school, high school, or college, you can adapt it to your class and material.

Dr. Mountain is a Professor at the University of Houston. Her area of specialization is literacy education. Her research interests are vocabulary development and study-skills methodology.