

Peer Leader Archetypes

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The Critical and Supportive- This peer leader understands their role as an educator first. They organize or suggest thoughtful, engaging, and challenging activities to facilitate learning in the students' intellectual and social success at the institution as their primary responsibility. They are careful to put learning first, friendship second, but know that the best learning occurs in a secure environment where risk-taking is encouraged. They are mature, confident, organized, flexible and collaborative.

The Crisis Counselor- This peer leader hones in on the often predominant emotional needs of the first-year students to the exclusion of intellectual transition issues. They may fail to appropriately refer students in emotional need to individuals certified to manage these issues and may even foment crises to maintain their status as the student's personal advisor and confidant. They may not be confident in their abilities to facilitate intellectual growth so may compensate by overemphasizing emotional issues.

Ebenezer- This peer leader relishes their authority role over near-peers and may exhibit unnecessarily authoritarian or gruff behaviors. They may interpret their role as that of disciplinarian and seek opportunities to inappropriately punish student behavior. They may wish to highlight their institution-savvy or intellectual acumen by pointing out the new students' lack of knowledge. A less surly variation of Ebenezer is Charlie Brown's teacher who has experienced school as a series of lectures, assignments, and quizzes and chooses to replicate their experience for students in their class.

The Cool One- This peer leader works to build friendships with the students by "dissing" the norms and expectations of the institution. At their worst, this peer leader may attempt to "buy" the students' friendship by extending invitations to inappropriate social activities, laughing off missed assignments, and focusing the students' attention on social issues. They may go so far as to offer suggestions for circumventing institution policies. A more benign version of The Cool One is The Friend Seeker, who may succumb to peer pressure from the students to lower the academic standards of the class in order to gain the students' affection.

The Disorienteer- This peer leader may have the best intentions of the students at heart but has not mastered the art of organizing their responsibilities, managing their time, or saying no to too many obligations. They may arrive late to class or other appointments, fail to complete tasks, or forget important activities. They may respond by being self-deprecating and offering continuing promises to change or they may become defensive and shift blame.