

Activating Learners Strategies

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3Cs: Collaborate, Cluster, Categorize

Description

As a way to summarize learning, learners work in small groups to brainstorm and then organize what they learned from a lesson.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy provides opportunities for learners to clarify and build on the ideas of their peers, which helps them clarify their own understanding and develop a respect for the ideas of others.

This strategy may also provide information to the teacher about student understanding of the learning target and reveal possible patterns of student misconceptions.

Implementation

Provide learners 10 slips of paper, note cards, or sticky notes. Each learner brainstorms 10 things learned during the day's lesson in 30 seconds or less, writing one item on each note. As a warm-up the next day, have learners form teams and share their notes in a shared space (virtual, as in Google Docs™ or TodaysMeet or local, as in a whiteboard or piece of chart paper). Then, the team works to cluster the notes and categorize them.

Tips

Some learners are more concerned with protecting their social status in the classroom than they are with actual learning (growth mindset), which makes them reluctant to be public about what they don't yet understand. Therefore, consider strategically developing the classroom culture to reward effort and growth in learning as much as or more than being "smart" or getting it right the first time.

4 Corners

Description

Learners self assess on a question or topic and then move to an area of the room where others are stating they are in the same point in their learning.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This activity provides learners choice and the opportunity to learn from and with peers. This strategy stimulates learning through having learners make choices, move physically, and discuss their choices.

Studies show that self assessment is associated with a greater sense of ownership and control over the learning process, which increases motivation.

Over time, self-monitoring can develop into explicit metacognition, which in turn enables learners to become more able to engage in deep learning. When students monitor their own level of understanding of a learning target, they are able to create action plans to improve and advocate for help when needed. Learners gain skills to advocate for what they need in terms of help and support and take an active role in seeking out that support. Learner self assessment helps teachers and learners adjust teaching and learning throughout the lesson.

Implementation

Create four signs, one for each corner of the room. Then pose a question (affective or cognitive) that has four possible responses. Clarify the possible responses if necessary. You may use an all-learner response system for learners to indicate their choice. Learners physically move to the corner that corresponds with their choice.

In small groups in the four corners, learners share what brought them to that particular group to draw out opinions, arguments, evidence, and questions. Have groups pick a spokesperson (e.g., shortest hair, lowest shoe heel) to summarize and share out. Then, at their desks, learners debrief this activity by, for example, reflecting in their journals how their thinking has changed or been reinforced. Additionally, learners could summarize their thinking in their journals by writing a set number of reasons to support it.

Another option might be to use this strategy for feedback purposes.

Post four posters, one in each corner of the room:

- Confused
- Curious
- Questioning
- Clear

Ask learners to reflect on the day's learning:

- Are you confused about something?
- Curious about some aspect of what you studied that we did not discuss?
- Questioning what you learned or even disagreeing with points shared?
- Clear and ready to move on to the next phase?

An additional option might be that once learners identify what they're thinking, they should visit one corner of their choice as they leave the room when class ends. At the corner, they leave a note with their name on it on the poster that explains their thinking.

You have options regarding the use of these data. For example, you can use the information to plan for the next lesson or share the results with students the next day and discuss potential actions.

Tips

The strategy can use any type of signs and prompts to get learners up and moving about the room while focused on a specific prompt.

You can also use this activity as a «voting with your feet» activity. For example, you can ask, What do you think is the most important concept we've learned today?, and learners go to one of the four corners to discuss.

Some learners may actually be confused after the small-group discussion. Take time to clarify any questions or confusion.

Feedback tip

In order for learners to effectively assess themselves and/or their peers, consider involving them in the process of establishing criteria for evaluating work outcomes and teaching them how to apply those criteria.

Some learners are more concerned with protecting their social status in the classroom than they are with actual learning (growth mindset), which makes them reluctant to be public about what they don't yet understand. Therefore, consider strategically developing the classroom culture to reward effort and growth in learning as much as or more than being "smart" or getting it right the first time.

Appointment Clock

Description

This is a strategy that offers learners the opportunity to act as instructional resources for one another by choosing talk partners based on an appointment clock.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy provides opportunities for learners to clarify and build on the ideas of their peers, which helps them clarify their own understanding and develop a respect for the ideas of others.

Implementation

Give learners a handout that consists of a clock face, labelled with 12, 3, 6, and 9. Set up this strategy early in the year to encourage learners to support each other and move around. Ask learners to identify four peers whom they will identify as a «clock buddy» for a particular hour. Once they complete this task, they will have a 12:00, 3:00, 6:00, and 9:00 buddy. Each learner will label his or her clock face with the partner's name.

As talk partners are used for various activities and conversations, have students go to a specific time on their appointment clock.

Tips

If you have some specific paired activities in mind, consider if it would be helpful to have learners partnered based on particular criteria. Leave yourself some options if you are uncertain about how you'll use the partner conversations. Keep your own notes about the basis for forming different clock buddies (e.g., 3:00 buddies are learners who have some interest in common) so that you know which partnership to use at different times. You might also have students look for partners based on criteria such as someone who they think has a learning strength in an area in which they are weak or someone with whom they might often disagree.

Also consider using landmarks, seasons, or some other way to establish four different talk partners that is easy to document, recall, and use quickly.

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Assessment Reflection

Description

This strategy is a post-assessment reflection completed individually first and then shared in a small group. After an assessment, the teacher provides a list of questions so learners can reflect on their assessment experience. During group discussion, ideas are collected as new information to support students to better prepare for and engage in future assessments and to use the results as a support for learning.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

All students are engaged in active thinking about assessment as a support for learning and their individual role in the process. This strategy provides information to the teacher about student understanding of assessment and their role in preparing for, engaging in, and using the results to support their learning process. This strategy provides opportunities for learners to clarify and build their ideas of success and struggle, which helps promote stronger engagement with future assessment.

Implementation

Once assessments have been scored, return to the individual student along with a list of questions for reflection. Have students individually reflect on and write about their assessment experience, using the questions as a guide. Facilitate small groups of students sharing their thinking and discussing their reflections. Have each group evaluate their discussion and select 1-2 impactful ideas/actions for sharing with the whole class regarding better preparation for and engagement with future assessments. Compile student ideas/actions on an anchor chart and post in the classroom for student reference. The student-generated ideas/actions become success criteria for students to use to prepare for and engage with assessment. Be sure to have students regularly check-in on and share out their progress toward the actions listed on the student-generated anchor chart.

Tips

Consider these or similar questions:

- How engaged were you with this assessment? Why?
- How did you prepare for the assessment?
- How does your preparation compare to your assessment results?
- What did you feel most confident about? Why?
- What did you do that led to your success or confidence?
- What was the most difficult part of this assessment? Why?
- What would you do differently next time?
- What was most confusing? Why?
- What do you know about the topic that the assessment didn't allow you to show or demonstrate?

You might also use strategies such as Plus, Minus, Interesting or Plus/Delta.

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Best Composite Paper

Description

Learners in a small group build a composite paper that takes the best features of their individual papers in order to help them recognize quality at the micro and macro levels.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy requires learners to be familiar with the success criteria for the piece of work and to be able to recognize specific qualities, or the lack of them, in the individual papers. It also requires them to piece these qualities together into a new, best whole.

This strategy may foster significant learning by learners who did not originally understand specific aspects of a project.

Implementation

In small groups, learners share their attempt at a piece of work, and the group identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the work based on the given success criteria. The group then goes through the success criteria one at a time and identifies each paper that met the criteria and comes to consensus on what to pull from the identified papers to use for the group paper. They continue with each stated success criteria until they address all criteria and build a complete paper.

Tips

Consider forming groups not based on friendship so that students may be more objective.

C3B4ME

Description

Learners are encouraged to seek three places to find the answer before asking the teacher for help.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Teachers can use this strategy to help learners become more self-directed in their learning. This strategy helps develop skills in community building, analysis, evaluation, problem solving, communication, and time management, all while helping learners take initiative.

Implementation

Say or write (on a poster, for example) “C3B4Me,” and then explain what practices you want to see from the learners. Here are example directions:

Before coming to see me, please contact three resources to try and solve your problem. For example, you can ask three friends, or you could ask one person, go online, or check the directions again before coming to see me. If you don’t find the answer you need, then come see me.

Tips

Some learners are more concerned with protecting their social status in the classroom than they are with actual learning (growth mindset), which makes them reluctant to be public about what they don’t yet understand. Therefore, consider strategically developing the classroom culture to reward effort and growth in learning as much as or more than being “smart” or getting it right the first time.

In the beginning, you may want to engage the class in role-play regarding how both to ask a peer for help and to give help. Setting up some guiding norms for these situations can help ensure that your classroom culture honors a growth mindset.

Collaborative Learning

Description

Learners work in small groups to complete a task or activity. Each learner is responsible for contributing to a specific portion of the overall task. Each may have specific roles within the group such as reader, recorder, or reporter.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Teaching learners to be self-directed empowers them with skills that are important inside and outside the classroom. The teacher can select more difficult and higher-level tasks when learners will be collaborating. Students learn how to support one another as learners.

Implementation

Depending on your plan, place learners in heterogeneous, random, or self-selected groups. The learners work in small groups of three or four to help one another with an assigned task.

Tips

Part of the culture of learning will necessarily be to establish group-management norms and tips. This type of group work prepares learners for adult work situations in which they will be working with people who are not their close friends. It also helps them experience a group approach to investigating problems/completing tasks.

Concept List

Description

The learners use a concept list as an organizational structure to identify concepts or main ideas they have learned.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Studies show that self assessment is associated with a greater sense of ownership and control over the learning process, which increases motivation. Monitoring their own level of understanding of a learning target supports learners in creating action plans to improve and advocate for help when needed. Over time, self-monitoring can develop into explicit metacognition, which in turn enables learners to become more able to engage in deep learning.

Learner self assessment helps teachers and learners adjust teaching and learning throughout the lesson.

Implementation

Give learners a well-constructed concept list, and provide high-level instruction on how to code levels of understanding.

Examples of coding methods could include:

- Plus = I get it
- Check = I sort of get it but need some help
- Minus or Question mark = I don't get it—help!

Or:

Learners may use the traffic light strategy (see Traffic Lighting Self) to code a list of concepts in terms of whether they understand them well, need a little help, or need a lot of help. A structure must be in place for learners to get help with the things they do not understand well.

Tips

Learners should be clear that this strategy is not for grading purposes, but rather to identify where they need more support and to assist them in thinking about how to improve.

Some learners are more concerned with protecting their social status in the classroom than they are with actual learning (growth mindset), which makes them reluctant to be public about what they don't yet understand. Therefore, consider strategically developing the classroom culture to reward effort and growth in learning as much as or more than being "smart" or getting it right the first time.

Concept Sort

Description

Used as a group review, the teacher provides a list of major concepts introduced in the content after teaching. Learners brainstorm what they know and what questions they have.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

All students are engaged in active thinking about the learning target and success criteria. This strategy supports a classroom culture of shared responsibility for learning and boosts motivation as learners progressively see themselves as more confident and competent. This strategy may also provide information to the teacher about student understanding of the learning target and reveal possible patterns of student misconceptions.

This strategy provides opportunities for learners to clarify and build on the ideas of their peers, which helps them clarify their own understanding and develop a respect for the ideas of others.

Learner self assessment helps teachers and learners adjust teaching and learning throughout the lesson.

Implementation

Determine the main concepts from a lesson. Then assign each concept to a different color index card, and give learners the appropriate number and type of cards. Working in small groups, learners write what they understand or ask a question about each concept on the appropriate color index card. If they have no understanding of a concept, they can leave the card blank. Each small group (or you) sorts the cards by color, analyzes and summarizes the information on the cards, and reaches well-reasoned conclusions about any common understanding, potential misconceptions, or questions for each concept. In a whole-class discussion, questions and misconceptions (differing ideas) are brought forward for discussion.

Tips

This technique works best when posting a chart showing the colors of the cards next to the names of the concepts they represent.

Some learners are more concerned with protecting their social status in the classroom than they are with actual learning (growth mindset), which makes them reluctant to be public about what they don't yet understand. Therefore, consider strategically developing the classroom culture to reward effort and growth in learning as much as or more than being "smart" or getting it right the first time.

Create a Recipe

Description

In this strategy, small groups create recipes for such things as productive groups and successful lessons, as well as for content-focused topics.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy is an engaging way to activate learners at the start of a lesson or learning activity, or to summarize learning at the end.

Students gain clarity and ownership of successful group processes that support positive peer interactions and reinforce a culture that values growth.

Implementation

Display a visual with a word bank of terms related to food preparation and presentation (e.g., cup, pint, teaspoon, pinch, chop, mince, blend, stir, bake, garnish). Ask small groups to utilize the word bank to develop a recipe for the assigned topic. Give time for task completion. At the end of the allotted time, invite small groups to select a spokesperson to share the group's draft recipe and explain some of the thinking involved.

Tips

You can break up this strategy into two tasks:

1. First, small groups brainstorm their own word banks.
2. Then they draft the recipe.

You may want to introduce and practice this strategy by choosing a fun, nonacademic topic to summarize in this manner.

Ask groups to discuss what they decided to include/not include, how they decided on relative amounts of ingredients, and why they used “gently stir,” for example, at the beginning of the example recipe.

Expert Help Board

Description

Learners identify areas of personal expertise, either by standard, learning target, or content-specific skill. Names are collected in a place accessible to all students, so learners have resources other than the teacher when they need assistance.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy activates learners as instructional resources for one another and supports a classroom culture of shared responsibility for learning

This strategy provides opportunities for learners to clarify and build on the ideas of their peers, which helps them clarify their own understanding and develop a respect for the ideas of others.

Learners gain skills to advocate for what they need in terms of help and support and take an active role in seeking out that support. Evidence suggests that learners often communicate more effectively with each other than they do with adults, so the person receiving feedback may get information that is easier for him or her to act on.

Implementation

Determine the skills/concepts to list on the expert board, and facilitate learners to assess themselves in each area, using success criteria for each one.

When you and the learner agree that the learner adequately understands a concept or skill, list the student as an “expert” for others in the class to go to for help with that area.

Set expectations for learners to seek out assistance when needed, starting with asking a peer who is listed as an expert. You need to assist only on those questions that no one else can solve. Assisting may require that you ask an appropriate question, offer a suggestion, or begin a solution—then the learner(s) can take over.

Tips

Initially, sufficient involvement by you may be necessary to ensure that learners are seeking, offering, and receiving the assistance needed.

In the beginning, consider engaging the class in role-play regarding how to ask an expert for help. Setting up some guiding norms for these situations can help ensure that your classroom culture honors a growth mindset.

Some learners are more concerned with protecting their social status in the classroom than they are with actual learning (growth mindset), which makes them reluctant to be public about what they don't yet understand. Therefore, consider strategically developing the classroom culture to reward effort and growth in learning as much as or more than being “smart” or getting it right the first time.

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Fishbowl

Description

Students ask questions, present opinions, and share information when they sit in the “fishbowl” circle, while students on the outside of the circle listen carefully to the ideas presented and pay attention to process.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy helps learners practice being both contributors to and listeners in a discussion. This strategy is useful for engaging all students in the discussion.

It provides opportunities for learners to clarify and build on the ideas of their peers, which helps them clarify their own understanding and develop a respect for the ideas of others. Students gain clarity and ownership of successful group processes, helping support positive peer interactions and reinforcing a culture that values growth.

This strategy may also provide information to the teacher about student understanding of the learning target and reveal possible patterns of student misconceptions.

Implementation

Two discussions occur—one within the circle on the topic and one at the end of the inner discussion concerning the outcomes and process of the inner discussion.

The setup includes a small circle (inner) of learners within a larger (outer) circle of learner observers. Observers are just that—silent observers who are listening, learning, and paying attention to process and content. Provide a topic, learning activity, or protocol to guide the discussion in the inner circle.

Inner circle participants may select a leader/facilitator to keep the conversation going and focused, or you may serve in that capacity.

Tips

Debriefing the fishbowl discussion is important. Evaluating their participation as either observers or participants, learners can share how the activity went and what they learned. They can provide suggestions for future improvement.

Fishbowls can be good pre-assessment activities because questions or ideas surface that the class can explore in more detail during the lesson.

Future Me

<https://www.futureme.org/>

Description

FutureMe is a website where students can type a letter to their future selves and select a date for delivery to an email of their choice. There is a free version and a paid teacher version for \$24.50 per year with sign-up using a school email address. Potential uses include setting/progress monitoring goals, providing self-encouragement, setting reminders/follow-up, and supporting metacognitive development, etc.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy provides opportunities for learners write a letter to their future selves, set a date for when they will receive this letter, and set goals for themselves. The letter auto-sends on a specific date to remind the participants of the contents of the letter. This strategy is helpful for tracking progress toward long term goals.

Implementation

Learners write a digital letter to themselves and set a customizable send date in the future for when they wish to receive their letter. Letter can be published privately or publicly.

Tips

Sample Questions

- If you were to write a letter to yourself at the end of this school year, end of middle school, end of high school, etc., what would you say?
- What goals do you want to capture and check in on in one month, six months, one year, four years from now?

Model the process by posing the question and drafting your own letter

Show examples on the “Read Public Letters” tab on the website <https://www.futureme.org/letters/public>

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Give One Get One

Description

Each learner completes a card or sticky note with an answer to a prompt. Then, learners circulate around the room sharing information and exchanging their cards.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy sets up an exchange of information in preparation for further exploration. It involves all learners and can be applied to a wide range of topics.

This strategy provides physical movement and allows individual perspectives to surface. It creates a shared base of information for further processing by all learners.

Implementation

Provide learners with a prompt. Each learner responds to the prompt by completing a card or sticky note. The notes on the card are brief, maybe even bullet points. Next, learners find a partner with whom to explain verbally what is on their cards. Then two options are possible: 1) learners exchange cards, or 2) learners write the idea/information from their partner on the card with their own idea. Each learner then goes to another learner to share and exchange again. After a few exchanges, learners return to their seats and share at their table or in small groups the information on the card. Small groups identify patterns and themes with the full class.

Tips

Add an explicit direction to paraphrase the exchanged information.

You can add a protocol for reflection or a prompt such as, one way the group added to my learning is . . . , or what is one contribution you made to the group's productivity during that session?

If the written information is fairly self-explanatory (i.e., detailed), then a possible variation could be that the partner should try to paraphrase what is on the card that he or she received in the exchange.

Got It and Need It

Description

Learners write on a sticky note or card something they understood (Got) about a lesson and/or something they still do not understand (Need).

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This reflective strategy is an efficient way to begin a plan of action or a commitment to applying new learning or learning tactics. It provides individual think time as well as a structure to focus sharing.

Monitoring their own level of understanding of a learning target supports learners in creating action plans to improve and advocate for help when needed. Over time, self-monitoring can develop into explicit metacognition, which in turn enables learners to become more able to engage in deep learning.

Implementation

You may want to use this strategy after a lesson and as learners leave or change classes. Analyze the learner responses, and modify or adapt instruction (or make a conscious decision to leave the current plan as is). You can even discuss the data with learners and share their ideas about next steps.

To help speed your analysis, learners can write these comments on sticky notes, and then you can place them in corresponding categories on a piece of chart paper.

Tips

Some learners are more concerned with protecting their social status in the classroom than they are with actual learning (growth mindset), which makes them reluctant to be public about what they don't yet understand. Therefore, consider strategically developing the classroom culture to reward effort and growth in learning as much as or more than being "smart" or getting it right the first time.

One idea might be to have learners categorize the sticky notes, which would provide an additional check for understanding.

Assure learners that this activity is not for grading purposes, but rather to identify where they may need more support and to assist them in thinking about how to improve.

Graffiti Wall

Description

This strategy provides an opportunity for every participant to collect his or her thoughts and to share them publicly in writing. It serves as a visual class discussion to share and clarify their learning.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy provides opportunities for learners to clarify and build on the ideas of their peers, which helps them clarify their own understanding and develop a respect for the ideas of others. This strategy may also provide information to the teacher about student understanding of the learning target and reveal possible patterns of student misconceptions. This activity requires learners to reflect on their own thinking and understanding, which in turn enables learners to become more able to engage in deep learning.

This strategy slows things down by eliciting written rather than verbal responses. It offers quiet think time, and the modality change may generate stronger responses from certain students.

Implementation

As a pre-assessment, prepare a graffiti wall before the lesson starts using one piece of chart paper for each topic. As learners arrive, have them write or post comments and/or questions about the topic on the graffiti wall. You can use two different colors of sticky notes or markers: one color for comments, the other for questions. Encourage learners to draw lines from their comments/questions to other students' comments/questions when they build off from them.

At a later point during the lesson, use this strategy as a way to uncover learners' thinking. You may want to ask for silence while learners collect their thoughts and post. Depending on how the debrief happens, consider asking learners to include their names/initials next to or on the back of their posting. This is an ideal way to reveal misunderstandings and unresolved questions.

Learners benefit from reading comments during the process, which helps them jump-start or solidify their thinking.

Tips

Hallways can be an ideal place to post a graffiti wall since they provide sufficient space for everyone to move around and see the wall.

One way to debrief is to give students time to read what their peers have posted and then ask them to point out/discuss specific posts.

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Group Analysis of Test Results

Description

In small groups, learners go over a recent test that the teacher has marked and returned. They assist one another with individual areas of need. The learners work together to identify and provide support for areas of demonstrated weakness.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This group process gives peers a chance to remedy gaps in understanding before calling on the teacher. This saves the teacher time and strengthens the understanding of learners as they describe what they don't understand or explain answers to others. Often learners feel freer to ask questions or to offer answers when they are interacting with their peers. Also, they tend to understand something better when a peer explains it to them in «learner language.»

Learners gain skills to advocate for what they need in terms of help and support and take an active role in seeking out that support.

Implementation

Return marked tests to students (grades may or may not be attached). Students then form small groups to review the test, item by item, discussing the correct response for each item and why it is correct. They answer any questions or address confusions that others in the group may have.

During the small-group conversation, circulate and listen for:

- learner use of the success criteria when providing specific feedback
- learners directly referring to evidence in their peer's work
- language that focuses on the work and not on their peer (judgment-free)

Tips

In the beginning, you may want to engage the class in role-play about how to ask a peer for help and how to give help. Setting guiding norms for these situations can help ensure that your classroom culture honors a growth mindset.

Not providing grades in the beginning makes this strategy more useful to students so they can look at what they know and don't know as feedback, rather than focus on a grade.

Consider establishing guidelines or structures to help students pair up productively.

Highlighting Rubrics

Description

Learners provide feedback to their peers by highlighting the elements of a rubric for a partner, after that partner has completed his or her own self assessment.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Studies show that self assessment is associated with a greater sense of ownership and control over the learning process, which increases motivation. Learners are encouraged to apply the success criteria to their own work to discover what they have/have not done correctly and to give them ideas about how to move their work to the next level.

All students are engaged in active thinking about the learning target and success criteria. Learners giving the feedback gain a deeper understanding of the success criteria by applying them to the work of others.

Peers can deliver feedback with more immediacy and in greater volume than the teacher can. Evidence suggests that learners often communicate more effectively with each other than they do with adults, so the person receiving feedback may get information that is easier for him or her to act on.

This strategy supports a classroom culture of shared responsibility for learning and boosts motivation as learners progressively see themselves as more confident and competent.

Implementation

Using highlighters of two colors—yellow for the learner and blue for a peer or you—both learners mark the rubric.

First, learner A uses a yellow marker for self assessment based on the rubric's criteria. Yellow highlighting means learner A thinks he or she successfully met the criteria.

After learner A completes his or her self assessment, learner B (or you) provides peer assessment by marking the same copy of the rubric with a blue marker. When both learners are in agreement, the criteria appear green in color.

The two parties discuss anything in either blue or yellow in order to reach agreement on the next steps needed for improvement.

Learners can use the rubrics:

- before an assignment as a self-check on what they need to accomplish when completing the assignment
- during an assignment to monitor their progress and take specific action for improvement
- at the end of an assignment as an evaluation of completed work

Tips

Peer feedback is most effective when learners feel comfortable with each other and supported by their peers, when they respect each other's opinions, and when they feel able to take risks and make mistakes. For these reasons, consider being deliberate about establishing a safe environment and allowing learners to have some guided practice with this strategy with sample work before doing actual peer conferences.

Peer feedback should never contribute to a final grade—use it only to make improvements. You may circulate during both the practice session and the actual peer feedback conference to observe and give in-the-moment feedback to students as they are meeting.

During the conversation, listen for:

- learner use of the success criteria when providing specific feedback
- learners directly referring to evidence in their peer's work
- language that focuses on the work and not on their peer (judgment-free)
- the overall quality of the feedback

Homework Help Board

Description

Learners identify areas within the homework where they struggled or had questions. On a board they list their name and either a specific question or area of struggle. Peers review the needs listed and identify who they might be able to help. The teacher sets up time for the peer assistance to occur.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy activates learners as instructional resources for one another and results in an efficient review of homework targeted to the areas of difficulty. This strategy provides opportunities for learners to clarify and build on the ideas of their peers, which helps them clarify their own understanding and develop a respect for the ideas of others.

Evidence suggests that learners often communicate more effectively with each other than they do with adults, so the person receiving feedback may get information that is easier for him or her to act on.

Learners gain skills to advocate for what they need in terms of help and support and take an active role in seeking out that support. This strategy may also provide information to the teacher about student understanding of the learning target and reveal possible patterns of student misconceptions.

Implementation

The learners identify problematic homework questions (perhaps by number or concept) and post their name and the help needed on a chart in the classroom. Classmates who succeeded at those particular problems seek out the learner who posted, and they demonstrate how to solve the problems, with minimal involvement from you. This strategy empowers learners to take responsibility for their own learning and to help their peers.

Consider the following questions as you decide which process best fits your classroom: If learner A sees that learner B posts the same problem, should learner A just add his or her name to learner B's note, or do you want a different helper to work with learner A? Once a helper identifies a problem/student to address, should the helper indicate on the chart that he or she can help and list his or her name?

To support the climate of the classroom, recognize the helpers at least once in a while. As a transition out of this activity, maybe a student who is struggling could say a few words about the help he or she received, or you could publicly name all the helpers on the list, or maybe a helper could share something that he or she learned in the process.

You need to assist only on those problems that no one else can solve. This help may require that you ask an appropriate question, offer a suggestion, or begin a solution—then the learner(s) can take over.

Tips

Initially, sufficient teacher involvement may be necessary to ensure that learners are seeking, offering, and receiving the assistance needed.

The names of learners needing help might be posted on sticky notes, written on chart paper, or written on a specified whiteboard.

Some learners are more concerned with protecting their social status in the classroom than they are with actual learning (growth mindset), which makes them reluctant to be public about what they don't yet understand. Therefore, consider strategically developing the classroom culture to reward effort and growth in learning as much as or more than being “smart” or getting it right the first time.

In the beginning, you may want to engage the class in role-play regarding how both to ask a peer for help and to give help. Setting up guiding norms for these situations can help ensure that your classroom culture honors a growth mindset.

How'd I Do?

Description

Learners reflect individually on the results of a recent test/assessment. They chart their progress on individual items, reflecting on strengths and needs.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

The process of reviewing work or understanding benefits the learner. Studies show that self assessment is associated with a greater sense of ownership and control over the learning process, which increases motivation. Learners are encouraged to analyze their performance to discover what they have/have not done correctly and to give them ideas about how to move their work to the next level.

This strategy requires learners to reflect on their thinking and understanding. Learner self assessment helps teachers and learners adjust teaching and learning throughout the lesson.

Implementation

To help learners effectively analyze their performance, provide a guiding framework. The first step is deconstructing the assessment to help learners see how their handling of particular problems/questions reflects on their level of knowledge, skills, or understanding. Once students are able to recognize their strengths and weaknesses, they can develop a plan of action.

How's It Growing?

Description

Learners analyze the work of a peer over a period of time, such as a week or more, to provide feedback on what has improved and what still needs work.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Peers can deliver feedback with more immediacy and with greater frequency than can teachers. Evidence suggests that learners often communicate more effectively with each other than they do with adults, so the person receiving feedback may get information that is easier for them to act on.

Learners giving the feedback gain a deeper understanding of the success criteria by applying them to the work of others. This strategy provides opportunities for learners to clarify and build on the ideas of their peers, which helps them clarify their own understanding and develop a respect for the ideas of others.

Implementation

The learner examines both a series of work that a peer has completed over a period of time and the success criteria for the work. The various pieces of work generally emphasize the same or close to the same skills, so the learner can see a range of responses to better check for improvement and provide more helpful, quality feedback. The learner uses learning targets and success criteria to focus his or her feedback to the peer whose work the learner examined.

Tips

Learners do not provide grades of any kind, just feedback.

Sometimes prompts are useful to help learners provide better feedback.

You may circulate during the peer feedback conference to observe and give in-the-moment feedback to learners as they are meeting. During the conversation, listen for:

- learner use of the success criteria when providing specific feedback
- learners directly referring to evidence in their peers' work
- language that focuses on the work and not on their peer (judgment-free)
- the overall quality of the feedback

Time reminders are useful to help learners pace the conversation. Plan five minutes at the end of these conferences to debrief the experience, asking questions such as:

- What was easy about that? What was hard?
- What did you notice when . . . ?
- What did you learn about . . . ?
- What did you learn about helpful feedback?

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iBrainstorm

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/ibrainstorm/id382252825>

Description

This digital tool is an iPad®; and Android™ app that allows learners to collaborate on projects using a stylus or their finger on screen.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Peer collaboration is one way for peers to serve as instructional support for each other. Brainstorming is a way that allows students to get their ideas down, group them visually, modify/arrange them, and ultimately share them with others.

Implementation

The «Get Started» pages within the app screen take very little time to complete, and the app is immediately ready for use. Students can drag and drop notes, organize them, free draw, or write on the screen with a touch or stylus.

With the app, you can easily manipulate the screen to collect and group whiteboard responses.

Tips

The iBrainstorm is used to connect up to four people on iPhones® or iPads® to one iPad® through Bluetooth®.

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Identifying Group Needs

Description

Learners, in small groups, discuss what they have learned and what they still need to learn from a particular lesson or series of lessons. The groups then decide which of these needs should be labeled as a «group needs.»

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

By talking together, the learners have a chance to remedy some of their peers' gaps in understanding before calling on the teacher. This saves the teacher time, strengthens the understanding of the learners as they share what they've learned and still need to learn, and provides for the possibility that an individual in the group has a need that someone else in the group can address.

This strategy provides opportunities for learners to clarify and build on the ideas of their peers, which helps them clarify their own understanding and develop a respect for the ideas of others.

This strategy supports a classroom culture of shared responsibility for learning and boosts motivation as learners progressively see themselves as more confident and competent in relation to their peers.

Implementation

The learners work in small groups to identify areas for improvement (group needs). These ideas may come from past assignments, questions individuals have, feedback received, or self assessment related to success criteria. Next, each group passes these on to you or to the whole class.

To close the feedback loop, you may decide to reteach certain key portions of the lesson or to match appropriate groups for peer support. Encourage learners whose needs were not identified as group needs to talk individually with you later.

Tips

Some learners are more concerned with protecting their social status in the classroom than they are with actual learning (growth mindset), which makes them reluctant to be public about what they don't yet understand. Therefore, consider strategically developing the classroom culture to reward effort and growth in learning as much as or more than being "smart" or getting it right the first time.

Introductory Survey

Description

The introductory survey is a strategy designed to collect data from students regarding learning targets/topics, learner interest, and learning dispositions. Students complete the survey prior to engaging in the learning, and the teacher uses the collected data to set up adjustments for the planned teaching and learning.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy provides the opportunity for learners to reflect on and self-assess their interest in and background knowledge of upcoming learning topics/targets and to engage in metacognitive thinking around their learning disposition. Studies show that self-assessment is associated with a greater sense of ownership and control over the learning process, which increases motivation.

This strategy provides the opportunity for teachers to adjust lesson plans, particularly in the affective domain, based on student data collected. Teachers gain potential insight into student interest, readiness, and disposition to inform selection of scaffolds or enrichments to the current lesson design.

Implementation

Design a survey to elicit student self-assessment of learning, interest, and disposition related to upcoming learning topic/targets. Administer the survey to students prior to the learning. Analyze the data to determine adjustments to the lesson plan. Describe to students the adjustments made in order to practice transparent use of student-collected data. Implement the adjustments and engage in reflection to determine the effects of adjustments and whether the desired outcomes were achieved with learners. Facilitate a conversation with students to solicit their feedback regarding the impact of adjustments on learning.

Tips

Sample survey questions:

- How interested are you in the topic?
- How satisfied are you with your current learning of “x” topic?
- How would you rate your knowledge of “x” topic?
- Disposition of self as a learner today (Example: “you better be good” to “I’m a sponge”)

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iThoughts

<https://www.toketaware.com/>

toolkit.png iThoughts

Description

This mind mapping app is a great visual tool to help you brainstorm ideas, plan projects and themes, and set goals. As students discuss ideas and possible answers to discussions, educators can visually see the path that their thinking takes, helping to understand how students are learning.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This tool provides opportunities for learners to collaboratively engage in thinking processes to generate a visual mind map of their ideas. The process of collaboratively mind mapping provides opportunities for learners to clarify and build on the ideas of their peers, which helps them clarify their own understanding and develop a respect for the ideas of others. This tool provides teachers with a visual to assess student thinking and to make decisions about student learning.

Implementation

Download and install iThoughts app on Apple devices or Windows. Launch app and follow prompts for creating mind maps.

Use the tool any time a lesson plan calls for students creating a mind map or graphic organizer. Facilitate students launching the app on their Apple devices and collaboratively creating a mind map.

Once students create their mind maps, view the visuals to assess student thinking relative to the assigned task. Use the data collected to determine your next instructional steps, such as providing feedback digitally in the mind map for students to apply to collaboratively deepen their thinking and/or providing a mini-lesson to address the student needs surfaced in the teacher data collection and assessment of student thinking.

Tips

Getting Started knowledge article

<https://www.toketaware.com/ithoughts-howto-getstarted>

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Jigsaw

Description

The teacher divides up a task among group members (usually small groups of three to four), who are each responsible for a part of the task. The group takes time to pool its knowledge to complete a final task.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy provides a variety of ways to cover a large amount of information in a shorter amount of time by dividing the information and assigning responsibility for becoming knowledgeable about a specific section to each group. The teacher uses this strategy to leverage time and learning.

This strategy provides opportunities for learners to clarify and build on the ideas of their peers, which helps them clarify their own understanding and develop a respect for the ideas of others.

Implementation

Three variations:

Expert Jigsaw:

Form multiple groups of five or six learners. Count off one to five, or however many learners are in the group. The Ones from each group form an expert group to work through a scenario or complete research. They then return to their original groups to share what they learned. Think about distributing tasks that will take a similar amount of time to complete, even though the readings may differ in topic and length.

Pieces-Make-the-Whole Jigsaw:

Split a reading into multiple pieces with each learner in a small group taking a part to read individually. When learners complete their reading, they share their parts with the whole group. In this way, each part is essential for the entire group to understand the whole picture of the text.

Building Jigsaw:

Distribute different readings connected in some way to the topic to each small group of learners. When each learner has finished reading individually, the small group shares and uses each reading to find connections and build deeper knowledge.

Tips

Determine the prompts for each task or reading. You may want to use protocols for sharing in small groups and then with the whole class.

Think about distributing tasks that will take a similar amount of time to complete (not just based on the length of a reading, for example). If the tasks are readings, each excerpt should be able to stand on its own (i.e., watch for references to previous text that learners haven't read, unfamiliar terms, the continuation of a thread).

Strong accountability structures are required for the success of this strategy. Explain and implement these as part of the culture of learning from the beginning of the school year. Each learner is responsible to do a quality job on his or her part of the task to ensure a successful and efficient sharing process. Groups may work on the same task or on different tasks.

Learning Logs/Reflection Sheets

Description

Learners maintain an ongoing log or journal where they periodically (daily, weekly) capture their thoughts about their learning. The logs or journal can be organized by the learning targets for the class, allowing learners to capture their thoughts as their learning evolves over time.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Monitoring their own level of understanding of a learning target supports learners in creating action plans to improve and advocate for help when needed. Over time, self-monitoring can develop into explicit metacognition, which in turn enables learners to become abler to engage in deep learning.

This strategy supports a classroom culture of shared responsibility for learning and boosts motivation as learners progressively see themselves as more confident and competent.

Implementation

Near the end of a lesson, learners write summaries or reflections explaining what they learned during the lesson (e.g., what they liked best, what they did not understand, what they want to know more about).

Learners can write about their progress toward learning targets:

- after they've completed an assignment or unit, so they can reflect on what that assignment or unit has contributed to their learning
- daily or weekly, so they can provide more general comments on their progress as indicated
- Learners may keep their summaries or reflections in a notebook or journal, online, or on individual sheets.

Learners usually hand these in for review and response periodically or at the end of the lesson. You, in turn, take time to analyze them, respond back, and, based on that information, perhaps modify or adapt future instruction (or make a conscious decision to leave the current plan as is).

Tips

Schedule this activity strategically—not just for when learners will have time to respond, but when they will actually be able to make instructional adjustments.

Learners can refer to their logs when having peer discussions about learning and/or when asking for or giving peer support/feedback.

Parking Lot

Description

Learners place questions that may or may not fit with the current topic or that no one has yet answered in a «parking lot.» The teacher reviews them and, at an appropriate time, responds to the learners.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Parking questions that are off-topic or semi-related until a later time allows instruction to focus on the learning targets and demonstrates to learners that their questions have merit.

Implementation

A sheet of chart paper or special portion of the board works well for the parking lot, and sticky notes (see Sticky Notes) are best for the questions since you can move them around to form categories.

Learners post their questions during, after, or between classes to minimize disruptions. Respond in some way to recognize the questions and to save them for later in order to stay on track with the learning at hand. Putting a question in the parking lot doesn't commit you to answer it but rather to respond to it. The response may be one of several options:

You will answer the question at a later time because it is related to a planned future topic.

The answer needs to come from someone or somewhere else (and therefore you will wait until you have more information before responding to the question).

A discussion is warranted but is best handled with a subset of learners.

Tips

While this is a simple strategy, responding to the items in a timely, respectful, and appropriate manner requires skill.

When appropriate, you can call on learners to respond to questions posted in the parking lot.

Partner Buzz

Description

Learners talk in pairs about a specific topic for a brief period of time (30 seconds to two minutes).

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This is a quick, effective strategy to elicit all voices in the room and allow a bit of processing time. Letting learners process with a partner deepens thinking and responses.

Implementation

Give a prompt or question for the learners to buzz about, and let the class know how long learners will have to talk with a partner. Learners buzz with someone near them about the prompt or question you posed.

Have a few learners share what they said during the buzz to prompt any questions or confusions from the whole group.

Tips

“Buzz” implies that the conversation is less than two minutes.

One potential use for the strategy is that after sharing the learning target and success criteria for the lesson, have partners take one minute each to answer the questions: What are we learning today?, Why is it important?, and How will I know if I have learned it?

Peer Assessment for Feedback

Description

Learners swap papers and check one another's work against a set of shared success criteria. Learners use the success criteria to review a peer's work, giving accurate and supportive feedback where needed.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

All learners are engaged in active thinking about the learning target and success criteria. Peers can deliver feedback with more immediacy and in greater volume than teachers can. Evidence suggests that learners often communicate more effectively with each other than they do with adults, so the person receiving feedback may get information that is easier for him or her to act on. Learners giving the feedback gain a deeper understanding of the success criteria by applying them to the work of others.

This strategy provides opportunities for learners to clarify and build on the ideas of their peers, which helps them clarify their own understanding and develop a respect for the ideas of others.

Implementation

Provide detailed success criteria in an easily understood format so that learners can check a peer's work and suggest improvements. The specific tool may vary, but all provide specific criteria to describe a range of possible learner responses and a consistent set of guidelines to rate learner work.

This strategy allows peers to provide feedback to other students at strategic points while they are still in the process of completing the assignment or task.

Learners form pairs and trade their work. Each student reviews his or her classmate's work along with the success criteria (e.g., rubric, scoring guide, checklist) and makes notes about findings.

Next, the two learners meet to conference. Student A (in the teacher's role) shares his or her comments as student B (in the student role) listens and makes notes. After discussing possible next steps, students work together to outline a plan for student B.

The learners then reverse roles, and the process begins with student B talking.

Make sure that you have taught learners how to give effective feedback and that they have had an opportunity to practice this strategy with each other using sample work before using each other's actual work.

Tips

Learners do not provide grades of any kind—just feedback intended to help with improving the work.

In order for learners to effectively assess themselves and/or their peers, consider involving them in the process of establishing criteria for evaluating work outcomes and teaching them how to apply those criteria. See the technique Rubrics for ideas on how to present and discuss rubrics so that learners really understand and can internalize what the levels of quality look like.

Peer feedback is most effective when learners feel comfortable with and supported by their peers, when they respect each other's opinions, and when they feel able to take risks and make mistakes. For this reason, be deliberate about establishing a safe environment and allowing learners to have guided practice with this strategy with sample work prior to engaging with peers using their own work.

You may circulate during both the practice session and the actual peer feedback conference to observe and give in-the-moment feedback to students as they are meeting. During the conversation, listen for:

- learner use of the success criteria when providing specific feedback
- learners directly referring to evidence in their peer's work
- language that focuses on the work and not on their peer (judgment-free)
- the overall quality of the feedback

Time reminders are useful to help learners pace the conversation. Plan five minutes at the end of these conferences to debrief the experience, asking questions such as:

- What was easy about that? What was hard?
- What did you notice when . . . ?
- What did you learn about . . . ?
- What did you learn about helpful feedback?

Peer Tutoring

Description

The teacher first assesses learner ability, performance, or understanding on a specific learning target, task, or concept. Then, the teacher pairs learners who performed well (tutors) with learners who are still struggling (tutees) to provide guidance, information, and feedback.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Activating learners as instructional resources for one another has many benefits. The process of tutoring benefits the learning of both the tutor and the tutee. The tutor must internalize information in order to present it to a peer, while the tutee has the opportunity to learn the material from a second viewpoint.

Evidence suggests that learners often communicate more effectively with each other than they do with adults, so the person receiving feedback may get information that is easier for him or her to act on.

This strategy provides opportunities for learners to clarify and build on the ideas of their peers, which helps them clarify their own understanding and develop a respect for the ideas of others. Learners gain skills to advocate for what they need in terms of help and support and to take an active role in seeking out that support.

Implementation

First assess learner performance for each learning target, task, or concept prior to assigning roles. Then, pair learners needing help (tutees) with those who performed well (tutors). Note that, while one learner may perform well with one task, he or she may struggle with another; thus, the roles of tutor and tutee are not fixed.

The learners work in pairs to help one another. The tutor is responsible for explaining or teaching the specific learning target, task, or concept and listening to the tutee to respond to his or her needs. The goal is to provide information or feedback to move the tutee's learning forward.

Tips

Providing structures for how to be a peer tutor may be helpful in many instances. Modeling is one way to introduce the practice.

This strategy should be used strategically and sparingly. Mixing up opportunities to be the tutors or teachers to learners who are struggling is important to reinforce that everyone has some skill to share.

Plan-Do-Study-Act

Description

Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) is a four-step improvement cycle that helps learners organize their learning as a result of the goal-setting process.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

The class or individual students can use the PDSA cycle to:

Plan: determine areas that need to be improved to guide the development of an action plan (student goal setting)

Do: implement the action plan (activate learners)

Study: analyze whether the improvement strategy (learning tactics) is making a difference (gather evidence of learning)

Act: use the data to make decisions

Monitoring their own level of understanding of a learning target supports learners in creating action plans to improve and in advocating for help when needed. Over time, self-monitoring can develop into explicit metacognition, which in turn enables learners to become more able to engage in deep learning.

This strategy supports a classroom culture of shared responsibility for learning and boosts motivation as learners progressively see themselves as more confident and competent.

Implementation

Develop a planning frame to support PDSA, and explain it to the learners. First, learners use their personal data to set goals (Plan) and outline a learning plan. These data can come from an external source (like a teacher or a benchmark assessment) and/or from a self assessment. Next, learners implement their plan (Do).

As implementation occurs, either you or the students can gather evidence of learning (progress monitoring), so learners can reflect on where they are in relation to the plan and how things are going (Study).

The Act occurs as learners use their data to adjust both goals and learning tactics.

Tips

Consider adjusting the prompts to Plan, Do, Check, Adjust, if that better meets learner needs.

After setting goals, consider providing success criteria to assist learners in developing a learning plan.

You may need to offer structure and guidance as to how to collect evidence in the Study Phase (see Progress Monitoring).

Give ample time for students to revise their work, adjust goals, and implement new learning tactics.

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Plus/Delta

Description

Learners provide input about what is going well and what needs to be changed.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Studies show that self assessment is associated with a greater sense of ownership and control over the learning process, which increases motivation. This strategy supports a classroom culture of shared responsibility for learning and boosts motivation.

Learner self assessment helps teachers and learners adjust teaching and learning throughout the lesson. The strategy gives learners opportunities to think about their own thinking and reflect on their understanding, as well as on what factors might be contributing to or detracting from their learning.

Over time, self-monitoring can develop into explicit metacognition, which in turn enables learners to become more able to engage in deep learning.

Implementation

Create a t-chart with two columns: Plus on the left and Delta (change, Δ) on the right. Ask learners to reflect on the following questions:

- What's working, helping, clicking, or sticking?
- What needs to change?

Then have learners add their thoughts to the chart. Have a class discussion about the results.

Use this strategy to:

- gather feedback at the conclusion of a lesson or unit
- evaluate teamwork during or after a group assignment
- evaluate a classroom process or routine

Tips

Be willing to make or support changes based on the learners' feedback in order for learners to take this strategy seriously.

PMI (Plus/Minus/Interesting Elements)

Description

Given a topic, small groups brainstorm the plus (P); minus (M); and interesting elements (I) associated with the topic, lesson, or idea.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

PMI provides structures to examine and reflect on options under consideration. This strategy both honors and expands individual and group viewpoints by focusing group members to generate both pros and cons.

The strategy provides opportunities for learners to clarify and build on the ideas of their peers, which helps them clarify their own understanding and develop a respect for the ideas of others.

Implementation

Designate a recorder (or have groups choose one), and explain that the brainstorming for each category (Plus, Minus, Interesting) must focus on that category. The interesting items include both the gray areas that are neither positive nor negative and items that are unknowns or curiosities. Direct groups to brainstorm pluses/pros, using the pattern when one participant begins, and the group generates ideas in a round-robin format with the option of a group member passing if wanted. After three minutes, have learners repeat the process with minuses/cons. After three more minutes, have them repeat the process with interesting elements. Finally, learners share their questions or key insights with their group members and then the group charts one or two to share with the class.

Learners use “P,” “M,” or “Interesting” to describe different aspects of a lesson. Analyze the responses, and modify or adapt your instruction (or make a conscious decision to leave the current plan as is).

Tips

You can use a carousel or sticky notes for this strategy. This information will help you adapt what happens during the lesson or in planning the next lesson.

Offer a minute of think time before beginning the brainstorming.

Have individuals record their own PMI ideas before the round-robin sharing. You may also use large charts in the room with students rotating between the charts, adding their thoughts.

This is a low-risk method for exploring controversial or emotionally charged topics.

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POLAR

Description

POLAR is an acronym for a talk partner strategy:

P = pair off

O = open up

L = learn through

A = active listening

R = respond to the prompt

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Activating peers as learning or instructional resources provides learners with an opportunity to test their thinking and learn from one another. Learners who are less confident have the opportunity to voice their ideas safely. This strategy lets learners develop skills in thinking, speaking, listening, collaboration, and cooperation.

Implementation

Provide questions or prompts for the pairs to engage with.

You can pair learners or let them choose a peer to learn with. Provide each pair questions or prompts to engage them in a discussion. The pairs discuss their responses to your questions or prompts, clarify content, and generate questions. Then they fold their hands to visually signal to you that they have finished. Once all pairs have finished, use a randomizer technique to elicit evidence of student understanding by having pairs report out on their response to the prompt.

Tips

Note that this acronym calls out active listening, which sometimes gets lost in quick partner shares. You can suggest that part of the exchange involves paraphrasing a partner's thoughts.

Peer collaboration is most effective when learners feel comfortable with and supported by their peers, respect each other's opinions, and feel able to take risks and make mistakes. For this reason, be deliberate about establishing a safe environment and allowing learners to have some guided practice with this strategy using a topic that is safe and that all can contribute to.

Preflight Checklist

Description

Learners use a checklist to evaluate their own work and to thereby improve the quality of the work before they submit it to the teacher.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Studies show that self assessment is associated with a greater sense of ownership and control over the learning process, which increases motivation. Learners are encouraged to apply the success criteria to their own work to discover what they have/have not done correctly and to give them ideas about how to move their work to the next level.

Implementation

First, you (and/or learners) prepare a preflight checklist that includes the basic requirements (e.g., title page, introduction, five-paragraph explanation, or conclusion) focused on the success criteria for a particular piece of learner work.

Learners may use the checklist, make adjustments, and then trade with a peer for additional feedback. To close the feedback loop, guidelines should make clear when and how learners are to use this feedback to improve their work.

Learners use this checklist to help them evaluate their own work and to thereby improve the quality of the work that they submit to you.

Variation:

Give learners a checklist prior to the start of an assignment. As learners finish a first draft, they give their assignment to a peer to be checked against the checklist.

Learners use this checklist to help them evaluate the work of a peer and to give feedback to improve the quality of the work that the peer submits to you. Learners indicate which items are present and call out missing items. They also note items needing improvement, based on the associated success criteria.

Tips

Some checklists will be generic—applicable to many assignments. Others may be specific to a particular assignment.

Review the learning target and checklist with the learners, so they will understand the alignment or connections between their work and the checklist. Whole-group practice might be one way to introduce this idea.

Teach peers to provide accurate feedback that is connected to the checklist and focused on learning targets and success criteria. Whole-group practice might be one way to introduce this idea.

Peer feedback is most effective when learners feel comfortable with and supported by their peers, respect each other's opinions, and feel able to take risks and make mistakes. For this reason, consider having guided practice with this strategy with sample work prior to engaging with peers using their own work.

You may circulate during both the practice session and the actual peer feedback conversations to observe and give in-the-moment feedback to students as they are meeting. During the conversation, listen for:

- learner use of the success criteria when providing specific feedback
- learners directly referring to evidence in their peer's work
- language that focuses on the work and not on their peer (judgment-free)
- the overall quality of the feedback

Time reminders are useful to help learners pace the conversation. Plan five minutes at the end of these conferences to debrief the experience, asking questions such as:

- What was easy about that? What was hard?
- What did you notice when . . . ?
- What did you learn about . . . ?
- What did you learn about helpful feedback?

Progress Monitoring

Description

Learners reflect on where they are in relation to the learning targets for a lesson or unit. The teacher provides guidelines for them to self-assess their learning and track their progress.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Learners evaluate their own work or understanding using a set of shared success criteria and then use the success criteria to monitor the progress of their learning. Learner self-assessment helps teachers and learners adjust teaching and learning throughout the lesson. Having learners monitor their personal learning progress sets up the understanding and, in a visual way, supports the development of a growth mindset.

Implementation

Create a recording tool for individual learners or the whole class to use. Ask learners to self-assess where they are relative to the learning targets, at the beginning and end of a lesson or week. Learners shade over in columns to create a bar graph indicating where they are with understanding and practice for each target. When done at the beginning and end of a lesson, both the learners and you have the ability to see the progression of learning.

Tips

Provide sufficient structure and guidance for the self-assessment task. Learners should not provide grades of any kind—just an indication of where they are in their learning.

Another method is to create wall charts with the learning targets posted. At the beginning of the lesson, learners place colored dots indicating where they fall in relation to each target. At the end of the lesson, learners place a differently colored dot.

Question Strips

Description

Learners, individually or in small group, write questions regarding anything they are unclear or want more information about, or are just curious.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Learner self assessment helps teachers and learners adjust teaching and learning throughout the lesson.

When done with small groups, this process strengthens the questions passed to the teacher and gives peers a chance to remedy gaps in understanding before calling on the teacher. This saves the teacher time and strengthens the understanding of the learners as they explain their needs.

Implementation

Learners either self assess or talk in small groups to check for understanding.

Then, the learners write questions about areas they are struggling with and/or those they want to extend their knowledge in. If working in small groups, they submit a group question to you if no one can answer it within the group.

Analyze the questions, noting themes and trends, and use this information to organize your responses and future instruction.

Tips

This strategy works well when reading either informational text or fiction.

Cut small strips from regular 8.5» x 11» pieces of paper, and then bundle for future use. A two-inch strip forces learners to get to the point in their questions. It also lets you easily arrange the questions in columns of like questions, to speed both analysis and response.

Red Flags

Description

As a method of self assessment, learners summarize their needs based on notes taken or artifacts produced during the lesson, using red flags to note areas where support for learning is needed.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Studies show that self assessment is associated with a greater sense of ownership and control over the learning process, which increases motivation. Learners are encouraged to apply the success criteria to their own work to discover what they have/have not done correctly and to give them ideas about how to move their work to the next level.

This strategy requires learners to think about their own thinking and reflect on their understanding.

Learner self assessment helps teachers and learners adjust teaching and learning throughout the lesson. Monitoring their own level of understanding of a learning target supports learners in creating action plans to improve and advocate for help when needed.

Implementation

Learners use the notes or other work produced during a lesson. Ask learners to review the work created and place red flags on areas that reflect where they need greater clarity or where reteaching is necessary.

Then find ways to provide the support needed to students based on their red flags. This could involve grouping students with similar red flags and/or having learners support their peers who had red flags where they did not.

Tips

Consider using colored sticky notes, dots, red pens or markers, or pink highlighters.

Rubrics

Description

The teacher shares a rubric with the learners in a way that allows learners to internalize the characteristics of quality work.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

The process of reviewing the rubric benefits the learning of both the learner doing the review and the learner whose work is being evaluated.

Implementation

Create a rubric focused on the success criteria, and share it with learners before they start a task or activity. Learners use the rubric to guide their work. Next, learners trade papers and check one another's work against a familiar rubric, giving sound feedback where needed. The process of reviewing benefits students, even if the original work is not that strong.

To accomplish this activity, learners really need to understand and internalize what the levels of quality «look like.”

Tips

The learners should not provide grades of any kind—just feedback on quality and suggestions for improvement based on the rubric criteria.

Say Something

Description

Learners use a protocol to construct meaning from text with a partner.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy is primarily used for constructing meaning from text-based information. Thinking out loud, supported by attentive listening, enhances individual and shared understandings. This strategy provides a foundation of shared information and an exchange of perspectives that, in many cases, illuminates thinking and clarifies understanding.

Students gain clarity and ownership of successful group processes, which supports positive peer interactions and reinforces a culture that values growth.

This strategy may also provide information to the teacher about student understanding of the learning target and patterns of misconceptions that may be present in the class.

Implementation

This strategy incorporates incremental stopping points to check for understanding. Through structured exchanges, partners develop connections between new information and what they already know or believe.

Explain to learners that they will be reading individually to a designated stopping point and then engaging in a brief exchange of ideas. These exchanges might include a brief summary, a key point, an interesting idea, a new connection, or a question.

Once each partner has reached the chosen stopping point, partners pause and «say something» to each other. Note: the statement should be fairly brief and succinct. Partners continue this process until each has completed reading. After the designated amount of time, widen the conversation (configure quartets, table groups, or full group). Partners can now summarize for a larger group what they shared as pairs.

Tips

Choose a reading selection that is relevant to your class's work, lends itself to segmentation, and is not too long. Have partners sit side-by-side so that text is a focusing point for their conversation and to minimize room volume. Use a public timer to balance time, talk, and task completion.

Scoring Guides

Description

Learners use a guide that helps them evaluate a piece of their own work.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

A scoring guide is an assessment tool, similar to a rubric but not always as involved, used to judge the quality of learner work in relation to content standards. It provides specific criteria to describe a range of possible learner responses and a consistent set of guidelines to rate learner work.

Implementation

Give learners a scoring guide that allows them to check their work and make improvements.

Tips

Learners should not provide grades of any kind—just feedback tied to the criteria described in the scoring guide and suggestions for improvement.

Self Assessment

Description

Learners evaluate their own work or understanding using a set of shared success criteria for the identified learning target.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Learner self assessment helps teachers and learners adjust teaching and learning throughout the lesson. The process of reviewing work or understanding benefits the learner, even if the original work or understanding is not that strong.

Studies show that self assessment is associated with a greater sense of ownership and control over the learning process, which increases motivation. Learners are encouraged to apply the success criteria to their own work to discover what they have/have not done correctly and to give them ideas about how to move their work to the next level.

This strategy requires learners to reflect on their thinking and understanding.

Implementation

Learners reflect on where they are in relation to the learning targets for a lesson or unit. When done both at the beginning and end of a lesson, both the learners and you have the ability to see the progression of learning. Success criteria is another tool for learners to use to self assess.

Give learners a way to record their self assessment to share with you or peers. Here are a few of the many types of recording methods:

Create a table on a sheet of paper with a row for each learning target and levels of understanding listed at the top of each column. Learners may shade in the columns to create a bar graph indicating where they are with understanding and practice for each target.

In contrast, another method is to create wall charts with the learning targets posted. At the beginning of the lesson, learners place colored dots indicating where they fall in relation to each target. At the end of the lesson, learners place a differently colored dot. This method allows the class to anonymously observe their progress as a group.

Sometimes the students are assessing not their work but their level of understanding. For example, when reading, learners can mark the text using symbols:

! = I got it

ü= I think I got it

? = I still need help

Tips

Provide sufficient structure and guidance for the self-assessment task. This structure may include modeling, as well as tools to support the process.

In order for learners to effectively assess themselves, consider involving them in the process of establishing criteria for evaluating work outcomes and teaching them how to apply those criteria.

Learners should not provide grades of any kind—just an indication of where they are in their learning.

Some learners are more concerned with protecting their social status in the classroom than they are with actual learning (growth mindset), which makes them reluctant to be public about what they don't yet understand. Therefore, strategically develop the classroom culture to reward effort and growth in learning as much as or more than being “smart” or getting it right the first time.

Shared Agenda

Description

Learner input—including questions, comments, and interests—is used to build or adjust the agenda or outline.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy provides opportunities for learners to clarify and build on the ideas of their peers, which helps them clarify their own understanding and develop a respect for the ideas of others.

Implementation

Collect learner questions, needs, and/or expectations on sticky notes (one comment per sticky note) or in a list. Then arrange the notes (or draw lines from the written list), indicating where you will cover each comment in the lesson or activity. This process highlights any adjustments that you need to make to the lesson.

For younger learners, you may capture their ideas orally and then write them in a list near the agenda. As time allows, you can discuss any comment not addressed that day.

Tips

To get the full value of this strategy, set clear expectations up front. Learners, for example, should not expect you to incorporate every item they suggest in a given day/lesson. Here are examples of suggestions that may not become part of the lesson but that you may address in some other way:

a student doing his or her own independent research to pursue something that's of personal interest but not directly related or essential to the class's study

you working with only an individual or small group to fill in an important gap that was uncovered during the collection step

Model active listening and responsiveness. Balancing learning targets with unanticipated learner needs will take skill and practice.

Stages of Concern (CBAM)

Description

This strategy helps learners place themselves on a continuum regarding where they are in the learning process or in adopting a specific change.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy helps learners identify where they are, in either the learning or change process, and to explore and discuss why. Learning new things (e.g., formative assessment strategies, learning tactics, new content) and experiencing change are difficult for some people. Helping learners process where they are allows them to benefit from both learning and change more fully.

Implementation

Post questions using the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) around the room before the start of the lesson. Learners move to the question/statement that best matches where they currently are with their understanding of the topic.

After learners move, ask them to briefly share (in their group) why they chose that prompt. If some groups are small and next to each other, you may want to combine them. Have groups pick a spokesperson (e.g., the one with the shortest hair, longest sleeves) to summarize and share out in 60 seconds or less.

CBAM question examples:

- + Refocusing: How can I use comprehension strategies to help me with other subjects besides reading?
- + Collaboration: How can I work with my peers to get better at other strategies?
- + Consequence: What impact are these strategies having on my reading?
- + Management: How do I get better at a few comprehension strategies?
- + Personal: How will using these comprehension strategies affect me?
- + Informational: I would like to know more
- + Awareness: I am not concerned about it

Tips

Some learners are more concerned with protecting their social status in the classroom than they are with actual learning (growth mindset), which makes them reluctant to be public about what they don't yet understand. Therefore, consider strategically developing the classroom culture to reward effort and growth in learning as much as or more than being "smart" or getting it right the first time.

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Start Without A Start

Description

This strategy provides the class a way to start making connections to the content without having to wait for everyone to be in the room. The teacher can use it to get thinking started; to begin, build, or deepen rapport; to connect learners to the learning they are about to experience; to solidify the learning just experienced; or to make connections between pieces of learning. The results are usually personal and can be used as formative data for the teacher.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Eliciting evidence of student thinking provides an opportunity for students to process information and get support when and where needed. It activates them as learners to think about a topic at hand and where they are in relation to it—what they know, don't know, and wonder about.

Implementation

You can use many strategies as a Start Without a Start, such as Give One to Get One or specific prompts. Prompts might include:

Since last class . . .

Movie or book title you might relate to, given where you are in your thinking about . . .

Getting a temperature read on where you are in your learning about . . .

Right now

Tips

Similar to bell work, this strategy builds or enhances learning, yet, unlike bell work, this strategy doesn't require that everyone be in the room or participate because you're eliciting thinking about content that you already presented, giving students more processing time and support.

It allows you to honor learners who arrive on time to class with a fun activity that can cause thinking or connections.

Stop/Slow/Go Signals

Description

During instruction, learners use discs, cards, or other red, yellow, and green materials to indicate that they understand (green) or that they need the teacher to slow down (yellow) or provide help (red).

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Studies show that self assessment is associated with a greater sense of ownership and control over the learning process, which increases motivation. This strategy requires learners to think about their own thinking and reflect on their understanding. Learner self assessment helps teachers and learners adjust teaching and learning throughout the lesson.

Implementation

Confirm that learners signal their understanding appropriately, perhaps by having learners who show green to explain the topic to the yellows, having the yellows make sure the greens really know their stuff by asking them good questions, and working with the reds to figure out where they have become confused.

Pay constant attention to the learner signals, and make decisions about when and how to interrupt the flow of the lesson to address needs.

Green = I got it

Yellow = I don't quite get it; I can keep going, but I have a question

Red = not close; I have a question that is getting in the way of my moving on

Tips

Make discs by laminating together two circular pieces of colored (red and green) paper or plastic.

Order colored cups online at party websites, or purchase them at party-theme stores.

A variation of this strategy might involve using numbered cards:

1 = totally confused

2 = shaky on this

3 = I think I get this

4 = got it; let's move on

Some learners are more concerned with protecting their social status in the classroom than they are with actual learning (growth mindset), which makes them reluctant to be public about what they don't yet understand. Therefore, strategically develop the classroom culture to reward effort and growth in learning as much as or more than being "smart" or getting it right the first time.

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Student-Developed Tests

Description

Learners develop tests or test questions to deepen their understanding of the content under study.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Research suggests that learners who review for tests by preparing and answering their own test questions perform better than those who prepare in more conventional ways.

Implementation

The learners (possibly along with you) develop test questions in a collaborative manner that allows them to think carefully about the content and to identify the most important concepts. The process also provides helpful information to you about learner learning. Your response to this information may take the form of reteaching certain concepts, reviewing others, or moving on.

Tips

Having learners develop different types of questions (i.e., true/false, multiple choice, matching) provides information about their thinking and how they are organizing it. For example, multiple choice is a good way to have students think carefully about other possible tempting answer choices. A good way to start would be to help students focus on what's most essential (e.g., asking them to list five important understandings that they want to confirm before they start developing their test).

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Student Goal Setting

Description

Learners evaluate their own work or understanding against a set of shared learning targets and/or success criteria. Learners then look at where they currently are in relation to the learning targets and success criteria and then set personal goals about where they want or need to be.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Studies show that self assessment is associated with a greater sense of ownership and control over the learning process, which increases motivation. Learners are encouraged to apply the success criteria to their own work to discover what they have/have not done correctly and to give them ideas about how to move their work to the next level. This strategy establishes a target for the learner to work toward that the learner values and feels control over.

Implementation

Learners collect data about where they are in relation to current learning targets. These data or evidence may include self-assessment information. After reviewing the data about current status and comparing the data with the goal or target that you identify, the learner sets a personal goal that will move him or her closer to where he or she needs or wants to be.

Ensure that goals are:

- specific
- challenging yet attainable
- short term (especially with students who struggle, so they can see success sooner)

Always follow goal setting with some sort of action plan, which the student can create or which you and the student can collaboratively create. You should also have a progress-monitoring plan or agreement about what evidence you will use to track the learner's growth and when you will collect and examine that evidence.

Tips

You may use a variety of structures to help learners organize their thinking about setting goals.

Study Groups

Description

Learners review for an upcoming test in small groups.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This group process gives peers a chance to remedy some gaps in understanding before calling on the teacher. This saves the teacher time and strengthens the understanding of learners as they describe what they don't understand or explain answers to others. Often learners feel freer to ask questions or to offer answers when they are interacting with their peers. Also, they tend to understand something better when a peer explains it to them in «learner language.»

This strategy provides opportunities for learners to clarify and build on the ideas of their peers, which helps them clarify their own understanding and develop a respect for the ideas of others.

Learners gain skills to advocate for what they need in terms of help and support and to take an active role in seeking out that support.

Implementation

Learners work together to identify and provide support for areas of perceived weakness. They may use various methods, such as Concept Lists or Learning Logs, to help identify the areas of need. Then they assist one another with individual areas of need.

Tips

Some learners are more concerned with protecting their social status in the classroom than they are with actual learning (growth mindset), which makes them reluctant to be public about what they don't yet understand. Therefore, strategically develop the classroom culture to reward effort and growth in learning as much as or more than being “smart” or getting it right the first time.

Table Talk

Description

Learners discuss responses to questions in small table groups prior to sharing with the whole class.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Activating peers as learning or instructional resources provides learners an opportunity to test their thinking and learn from one another.

This group process gives peers a chance to remedy some gaps in understanding before calling on the teacher. This saves the teacher time and strengthens the understanding of learners as they describe what they don't understand or explain answers to others. Often learners feel freer to ask questions or to offer answers when they are interacting with their peers. Also, they tend to understand something better when a peer explains it to them in «learner language.»

Implementation

This strategy is designed for an entire table of learners to have the opportunity to engage in a dialogue about or discuss a topic. Based on the number of learners at a table, a minimum for table talk is 5 minutes (more like a table buzz) and more typically 10 minutes to allow each learner an opportunity to talk and the group to explore responses in more depth.

Tips

Setting guidelines or assigning different roles may help everyone at the table have air time and provide attentive listening. Some learners are more concerned with protecting their social status in the classroom than they are with actual learning (growth mindset), which makes them reluctant to be public about what they don't yet understand. Therefore, strategically develop the classroom culture to reward effort and growth in learning as much as or more than being “smart” or getting it right the first time.

Talk Partners

Description

Learners are assigned to or choose a peer to discuss responses to questions, clarify content, generate questions, and learn with.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Activating peers as learning or instructional resources lets learners test their thinking and learn from one another. Learners who are less confident have the chance to voice their ideas safely. This strategy gives learners the opportunity to develop skills in thinking, speaking, listening, collaboration, and cooperation.

This strategy also provides opportunities for learners to clarify and build on the ideas of their peers, which helps them clarify their own understanding and develop a respect for the ideas of others.

Often learners feel freer to ask questions or to offer answers when they are interacting with their peers. Also, they tend to understand something better when a peer explains it to them in «learner language.»

Implementation

Talk partners allow learners the opportunity to learn from and with each other. They are especially useful to test ideas and practice explaining them before having to share with the whole class.

Provide guidance and structure(s) to the learners; ground rules (how to be a successful talk partner) may be developed collaboratively.

This strategy takes many forms:

You can assign Go To partners

Shoulder, Elbow, Back, Knee-to-Knee, or Table partners are in close physical proximity

Clock Appointments or Seasonal Partners allow learners to choose partners and then physically move to talk with the indicated partner

Tips

Modeling is a good way to introduce this strategy.

The use of this strategy gives you more opportunities to ask higher-order questions.

Some learners are more concerned with protecting their social status in the classroom than they are with actual learning (growth mindset), which makes them reluctant to be public about what they don't yet understand. Therefore, consider strategically developing the classroom culture to reward effort and growth in learning as much as or more than being “smart” or getting it right the first time.

Think-Pair-Share

Think-Pair-Share-Squared

Description

This strategy creates individual think and processing time with a partnered exchange to explore the thinking.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy is extremely versatile and can be applied to a wide variety of contexts. The “think” (and sometimes “write”) portion allows students time to clarify their own thinking before sharing out loud with a peer. Individual preparation time increases the confidence of each partner and the quality of the exchange. Written notes can increase focus and momentum when partners begin their conversations.

The paired exchange creates readiness for further exploration of a topic. This strategy balances participation and provides a low-risk, time-efficient method for shared exploration. Learners who are less confident have the opportunity to voice their ideas safely with a peer before going to the whole group. Learners can test their thinking and learn from one another.

This strategy provides learners the opportunity to develop skills in thinking, speaking, listening, collaboration, and cooperation.

Implementation

Give learners a prompt, stem, or questions to think (and if applicable, write) about.

After two minutes or so, the learners find partners to form pairs. The pairs can be predetermined, organized in the moment, or based on proximity. Partners share their responses.

After the pairs have had adequate time to process together, ask some to share their best thinking with the whole class to spark class discussion and common understanding.

Learners do Think-Pair-Share with adequate guidance and structure for them to understand why they are doing it and how to use the time to respond well. Learners can take advantage of the think time to work out their thoughts, and as a result, their contributions to the discussion are more elaborate and thoughtful.

Consider strictly timing the intervals for the first and second rounds of thinking and listening. Otherwise, dominant learners are likely to take up most of the time.

Tips

Provide an overview of the three steps so that participants know they will be sharing their responses with at least one other person.

Think-Pair-Share-Squared offers a modification of Think-Pair-Share, adding the opportunity to join with another dyad to share conversation results. This can be particularly helpful if participants tend to connect with the same person and can expose learners to more perspectives without necessarily doing a whole-group share.

Some learners are more concerned with protecting their social status in the classroom than they are with actual learning (growth mindset), which makes them reluctant to be public about what they don't yet understand. Therefore, consider strategically developing the classroom culture to reward effort and growth in learning as much as or more than being "smart" or getting it right the first time.

Traffic Lighting Self

Description

This strategy has learners self assess on their level of understanding of content in their work using a system of green-yellow-red indicators.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Studies show that self assessment is associated with a greater sense of ownership and control over the learning process, which increases motivation. This strategy requires learners to reflect on their thinking and understanding. Learner self assessment helps teachers and learners adjust teaching and learning throughout the lesson.

Implementation

Give learners colored markers/pens or colored cards, and provide high-level instruction on their purpose so learners know how to use them to code their levels of understanding. Also give learners practice time.

This strategy can include compiling learners' individual traffic lighting results on a chart using dot stickers or colored markers. The chart provides a quick assessment of the learning needs of the class as a whole and has the added feature of visually revealing trends.

Green = I got it

Yellow = I don't quite get it; I can keep going, but I have a question

Red/Pink = not close; I have a question that is getting in the way of my moving on

Tips

Allot time and put a structure in place for learners to get help with the things they do not understand well.

Younger learners can simply draw a smiley, neutral, or frowning face in pencil to indicate their level of understanding.

A variation of this strategy might be:

Red = totally confused

Yellow = shaky on this

Green = got it

Verbal Shared Agenda

Description

Learner input—including questions, comments, and interests—is gathered verbally and used to build or adjust the agenda or outline.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy provides opportunities for learners to clarify and build on the ideas of their peers, which helps them clarify their own understanding and develop respect for the ideas of others.

Implementation

Collect learner questions, needs, and/or expectations orally, and write them in a list near the agenda. Consider drawing lines to indicate where in the lesson you will address student items. This process highlights any adjustments that you need to make to the lesson. You may circle items not addressed that day and encourage students to engage in self-directed discovery/learning for homework or choice time and report back to the class.

Tips

Sample Questions

- If today were the most powerful learning experience about “x” topic, what would you hope to learn?
- What do you wish/need to know about “x”?

To get the full value of this strategy, set clear expectations up front. Learners, for example, should not expect you to incorporate every item they suggest in a given day/lesson. Here are examples of suggestions that may not become part of the lesson but that you may address in some other way:

- a student doing his or her own independent research to pursue something that’s of personal interest but not directly related or essential to the class’s study
- you working with only an individual or small group to fill in an important gap that was uncovered during the collection step

Model active listening and responsiveness. Balancing learning targets with unanticipated learner needs will take skill and practice.

What's in It for Me (WIIFM)

Description

The teacher provides learners the opportunity to personalize the learning experience about to occur and implicitly set a personal goal.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

When learners see relevance and meaning, they are more likely to find the learning interesting and to retain it.

Implementation

Learners reflect on what their personal expectation is for the learning experience or lesson. They can write on sticky notes and post the notes, share out loud with a partner or table group, capture the expectation as a note to self, write in a journal, etc.

Provide time during and after the lesson for learners to check in on the status of their personal goals. If the learners are not meeting their goals within the lesson, they share that information with you so that you can make immediate adjustments to instruction or plan for the near future.

Tips

Teaching learners basic goal-setting strategies is important. Learners need to understand the differences between immediate, short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals (as appropriate for their age).

Wrap It Up

Description

Learners write comments about a topic or the lesson just covered on sticky notes and put them on a chart as they leave the room.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Collecting evidence of learning at the end of a lesson provides learners the opportunity to reflect and the teacher data to use as feedback on the lesson just completed and in planning the next lesson.

Implementation

Learners use sticky notes, index cards, paper strips, or a digital tool to provide reflections on their learning at the end of a lesson or class. Give learners the prompt and the tool. The tool may be a chart that provides an organizational structure for the learners to classify their comments. The learners compose thoughtful notes and put them on a well-framed tool, such as a parking lot (see Parking Lot) or something more highly organized. Take time to analyze the responses, give the learners feedback, and modify your instruction (or make a conscious decision to leave the current plan as is).

Variation:

Learner groups review the work of other groups in a carousel, and then write comments about the work on sticky notes and place them directly on the work. Later, learners return to their groups to review the comments left by other learner groups and have an opportunity to revise their work. Take time to review learners' sticky notes to be sure they are on track. The notes may also suggest misunderstandings that you can address through additional instruction.

Tips

Organizational structures help advance learner thinking and also speed your analysis of the responses. Possible organizational forms include a Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities, Parking Lot, or Tweet.



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