

Teaching and
Learning
Strategies
2009 (A
Refresher)

Setting the Agenda

Just like we have a set agenda for a meeting why not present students with an agenda for the lesson. The agenda could be written on the board in dot point outline form at the start of the lesson. As each part of the lesson agenda is completed you could then tick it off as a visual reminder to the students.

In this way students get an idea of what is coming up in the near future and a sense of achievement as each area of the lesson is completed.

Increase Thinking by Jumbling

One of the things we know for certain about the skills required by future workers in the 20th Century is that they will need to creatively solve problems. Underpinning this is the ability to THINK.

So as educators we will need to get past the notion of a teaching approach familiar to us all (i.e teacher gives information....students spits information out) and more to a model where students have opportunities to solve and analyse and create and think for themselves. AND we need practical strategies that help us to do this.

An effective yet simple way for students to learn more effectively, to think and to solve problems rather than providing them with the answers all the time is to give jumbled information to solve before attempting a task. It is particularly useful for procedural type information. See back for an example.

Q and A

A variation on question and answer tasks can be done like this:

After reading an article or handout have students devise their own open ended questions to the handout and then provide the answer to their own question.

On completion you can then have a class discussion where students share their own questions and answers. In this way students may well develop deeper, broader and more interesting insights into the article than if the questions were designed only by us, the teacher.

A variation would be to provide the answers to a student and have them devise what the question might have been for that answer.

Raffle Tickets (Rewards)

A behaviour management strategy is the raffle ticket system. When a student is working well give them a raffle ticket. For example when they volunteer to read in class, when they hand in work, when they doing something nice, when they persevere when work is hard etc etc. At the end of each week/fortnight have a raffle with prizes. Emphasise to the students the more raffle tickets they earn the more likely they are to win.

The Gallery

If students complete a major project, folio, display, poster or research assignment get the students to place their work on the classroom walls and then conduct a "gallery walk" where students wander around the room viewing other students work.

A question and answer session could follow to ask individual questions about particular students' work.

SIMULATION ACTIVITIES

There is a very apt Chinese adage that goes something like this:

Hear and I forget, see and I remember, do and I understand...

This is true for all of us. Personally I am hopeless at tying knots - I can hear and see the instructions ok but can never really grasp it until I can actually do it and practice it.

I'm sure this is the situation for many of our students in their various learning opportunities. One of the ways students can **do** is by setting up simulation activities. In this way they not only see the learning but can **feel** it to.

Attached is an example of using simulation activities - on poverty.

There are many more that you can find simply by doing a google search - for example - preferential voting systems (Civics and politics), movement within in a living microscopic cell, movement of planets in the solar system, pin the labels on the skeleton (another student) etc etc

In a 75 minute lesson structure there is greater opportunities to use simulation within the lesson.

Use of Video as Stimulus Material (YouTube):

As you are aware YouTube or TeacherTube are a literal gold mine of educational resources. The best part about these is they are often short sharp video pieces that provide excellent stimulus material from which all sorts of different activities could flow:

Snowball

Learner A is taught a concept or skill. A teaches B.

Both A and B teach two others and so on until all students in the class are taught the original skill or concept. You could imagine that this would be useful in many situations. For example:

- Teaching a computer skill
- A physical skill or technique in PE
- A specific skill in a woodwork or foods class
- A grammar rule in English
- a mathematical formula to apply to problems
- etc etc

Speed Dating

Each student becomes an expert on a particular topic during a research task of some description. You then set up the classroom in a speed dating format. They have 1-3 minutes (for example) to complete their "date" (share the information) and then one person moves to the next "date".

The Competitive Edge:

One of the best ways to engage students in learning is to put a competitive edge to a task. This is particularly useful for boy's engagement. The following is just a small sample of the myriad of ways that you could introduce an element of competition:

- Run a quick snap quiz
- Hold a test/quiz in "Who wants to be a Millionaire" style
- Play true/false games of elimination using heads or tails (hands on heads or hands on tails)
- Write as many words that start with "ch" in 30 seconds
- Write a particular written response in EXACTLY 25 words
- Play an interactive quiz game of PACMAN (those of the X Generation will love this) Ask students how to play it because many of them know it well.
- Conduct the 30 second Maths challenge from the Sunday Herald Sun
- Put a puzzle on the board to be solved during the lesson (in between normal class work)
For example:
 - Interpret this: ECNALG or
 - What is this: 12 S of the Z or
 - Find the Capital city hidden in these sentences, "Captain Nemo scowled" or "TV executives announced their September lineup."
 - Judge the best cake made
 - introduce theatre sports
 - Many many more

Secret Student

This technique is a great way to motivate students. Before a class draw a name from a hat containing all the students' names. Keep this name a secret. Tell the students that the 'secret student' will be watched to determine if they have behaved well, worked productively and are deserving of a reward.

Upon completion of the lesson the name of the student is revealed and a prize given if deserved.

A variation on this for one of your more "difficult students" performs particularly well you might pretend his/her name was drawn, even if it wasn't. That may help to promote more positive contributions in the future.

The Interview

When you have a lesson that involves busy, quiet, heads down type work tell the students you

are going to wander around the room conducting one on one interviews with them. Have a notepad with you.

Tell them you will ask each of them three questions - these could be anything but an example might be:

1. Your favorite memory from primary school
2. Your favorite memory from secondary school (so far)
3. What you think you would like to do after school.

Why do this?

Successful teaching is underpinned by relationships. This just gives you an opportunity to get to know students and develop a positive relationship in a different context. It also sends a message to these students that you care about them - as an individual. You might be surprised that the students are excited by this opportunity and may well sit quietly 'awaiting their turn'

STOP - START - KEEP

This strategy involves asking three key questions to a group or individual and is borrowed from an organization called "Leading Teams":

What should we/I **STOP** doing?

What should we/I **KEEP** doing?

What should we/I **START** doing?

In terms of uses in the classroom you could be more creative than me but some ideas might be:

- if class behaviour is not great it might be used as the starting point for a fresh start and reinvigoration of classroom expectations
- as a way of analyzing an issue eg Australia's response to climate change
- as a way of reflecting on issues like bullying.
- as a way students could evaluate their own individual work habits - eg approach to class work, study plans, homework etc

TIME ZONES IN LESSONS

This strategy is better used at the start of the year or semester as a way of setting the ground rules. It involves nominating and then defining time zones in lessons where the expectations on students might be slightly different. Once the time zones are named you can then, in consultation with the students, outline the expectations within that time period.

For example (and you can make these up for yourself):

1. Class Discussion Zone
2. Group Work Zone
3. Computer Zone
4. Partner Work Zone
5. Individual Quiet Time Zone

The last one in particular is still a legitimate use of classroom time. Despite all the changes to

teaching, there are still times where silent, independent work will create more productive outcomes for students. **We can set this expectation.**

The above are just examples of the concept - you can be far more creative if you like and have better names, different zones, colour codes etc etc.

The Timer

Use a kitchen timer (or you could easily use your mobile phone alarm). Tell the students that you will set the timer for anywhere between one minute to 20 minutes. Choose this randomly but don't tell the students what the countdown clock is set to. Tell the students that you will be evaluating their class behaviour at the very moment the bell sounds. If behaviour is what you are looking for them provide some sort of reward or incentive.

The idea is to encourage students to stay on task at all times for 'fear' of misbehaving when the alarm eventually goes.

Expectation

Research suggests that the most important factor in successful student learning is **the teacher**. That in itself is an awesome reality to consider.

Can I go further and suggest that while teaching style, skill, practice, knowledge of content, methodology, rapport with students etc are all most important the most critical factor that drives everything else is the attitude of the teacher.

As Haim Ginnott so beautifully put it:

"I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate..."

This can never be more true than when we ask ourselves the most simple of questions about EXPECTATION. Do I set expectations high for my students?

For the reality is this:

(i) Set the expectations low and students will meet it.

(ii) Set the expectations high and the sky could be the limit.

Many of you might be aware that Lippy has been experimenting with the concept of expectation in his Maths classes. He has set the expectation high. The pass rate for his tests is 80%. Students who fail to meet this standard must re-sit the test. Has the performance of students increased? You betcha! It would be great if we could all go and visit primary schools and see for ourselves the amazing things being achieved by students at lower levels. In doing so I sense we would discover that as secondary teachers we do have a tendency to underestimate the talents and capabilities of our students.

We just need to give them the license - by setting our EXPECTATIONS high.