Discussion Leader Activity: Teaching to learn: devising & explaining mnemonics for review

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Activity Type: Small group creative expression / poster creation

Time Needed in Discussion: 45 minutes

Purpose

• To help students get a better understanding of a difficult concept and devising a useful tactic to remember
• To give students an opportunity to come up with a creative way for understanding confusing and detailed ideas, and to help their fellow students learn
• To teach students that a valuable study method is to figure out how to understand it yourself and then teach it to someone else

Abstract

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<thead>
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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-class prep</td>
<td>30 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher assigns groups &amp; passes out materials</td>
<td>5 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher goes around helping groups understand their concept &amp; think of good ways to explain to class</td>
<td>20 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students present their concept and how to remember the overall idea</td>
<td>20 min</td>
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Supplies

• Markers
• Large sheets of construction paper
• Masking Tape
• Index card for each group with lecture # & date, and concept they are to describe
• Stop watch or timer
• Think of additional materials you might bring: play-doh, pipe cleaners, paper and scissors

Pre-class Prep

• Figure out which concept you want to cover from each lecture and prepare an index card to give to each group so they understand what their assignment is. It’s good to stick with something that’s not TOO complex, but also things that seem to be problematic areas.
• For example, one group could focus on the difference between the Law of Segregation and the Law of Independent Assortment.
• Create 10 topics from recent lectures so each group of 3 gets a different one.
**In Class**

1. (2-3 min) Explain what the activity for the day is:
   “Today you’re going to get into groups and each group will be given one concept to focus on from a particular lecture. You all are going to come up with a good way of explaining the concept to your classmates so everyone has a better understanding of the idea. You need to be creative, by either coming up with a good figure, a mnemonic, or even a skit to help teach your concept in a way that people will be able to remember and incorporate the idea into their understanding.
   “You’ll have 15 minutes to come up with an idea, and then each group will have 2 minutes to present – so you want to be clear and concise and not too long winded! I don’t want you to describe your concept the way the book describes it because anyone can (and should already have) read over the chapter. TEACH it in a way that helps you understand. This will not only help your fellow students better understand and remember the idea, it will help you as well – the best way to learn is to teach!
   “The assignment is worth 3 points and you WILL be graded on participation, clarity, and creativity!”

2. (2 min) Assign students into groups of 3 or 4. You can choose to hand out markers and large sheets of construction paper for students to use if they choose, or you can leave them up front to motivate students to think “outside the box.”

3. (15 min) Go around to each group while they all work and give some helpful hints. Make sure they understand what they’re explaining and they don’t give out wrong info. If they’re making a poster, tell them to write LARGE and post it up high so everyone can see while they explain.

4. (25 min, if you are good) Have each group present for 2 minutes in order by lecture. Time their presentations with a stop watch and stop them at the 2 min mark. Everyone in the group must stand and participate. If they mention anything wrong, ask the class what might be improved with that explanation. Emphasize anything you think is important. Be enthusiastic and positive about everyone’s creativity and participation.

**Things to Ask or Emphasize**

- After each group’s presentation, ask them (or the class) a question that they didn’t necessarily address in their presentation – this will keep everyone on their toes.
- Encourage students to take notes while the other groups present (this helps them remember the valuable mnemonics for later and also keeps them quiet during other people’s presentations).
- The teacher should take notes as well, so the students know that you’re serious about grading them on participation, clarity, and creativity. Tell everyone that all group members need to participate.
Comments

- Some kids love to talk and talk, but you have a very strict time limit, so stick to it. Then later groups will know that they’ll get cut off if they don’t explain their point in the proper amount of time AND since you’re grading these, they’ll be sure to include only relevant pieces of info.
- Consider making a worksheet to go along with the activity with all the lectures and concepts listed. Everyone gets a worksheet, they design a teaching tool for one, and take notes for all the others.
- If you don’t use a note-taking worksheet, be sure to have students get out their lecture notes and ask them questions to help them stay engaged.

This activity edited by Adrienne Williams