Special Education

Active Learning Strategy #4 Structure: Response Cards

Content: English 9 Short Story Unit Required reading, “Christmas Memory”

Setting: Special Education Class of 9 students.

Implementation: In the story “Christmas Memory” there are (10) new vocabulary words. On the promethean board, I had designed three types of multiple choice questions: First, term and select best definition out of three. Second, definition and choose the best spelling of the term out of three.

Outcomes: One of the best practice reviews. We began class with the response cards practice and ended the class again with the response card practice to see immediate improvement. We practiced the following day again and took the quiz the third day with much success.

Adaptations: I read the questions to keep momentum and fluency but with more practice will ask for volunteers to keep participation heightened.

Chorus

Strategy Paper #1

Quiz Quiz Trade used with the Concert Choir (upper selected group) on Sept. 6

Why the strategy was chosen: This particular strategy was new to me – at least in name and as an ice breaker/community builder. Thus, I wanted to try it. Plus, I plan to bring it back later to use as a review for our jazz unit study. By starting with this strategy as an introductory piece, the students will already know the procedure when it returns in a more academic venue.

Procedure: I had the students write a “school-appropriate” question about themselves that might not be known to anyone else, including their first and last names within the question. Then the answer was written on the back. Students paired, exchanged questions and answers, and then traded cards. As they completed that task, each would raise a hand and move to someone else with a raised hand starting the questioning again.

Result: The students were a bit tentative, at the start, to approach new choir members, mostly choosing old friends with raised hands. As the exchange of cards continued, however, I saw more interaction between new and old members which was the intent of this mixer. The students enjoyed the information exchange (some cards were quite humorous) but more than that, they enjoyed talking with everyone and feeling that they were becoming a group. I then collected the cards and read them at home. I learned a few things about my students that I didn’t know as well.
Next Time: I really thought this went very well as an opening activity and accomplished my goal of inclusion and participation. I will use this strategy again to review information gained in our jazz study unit. The students will need to write a question and answer and then quiz each other. I think that I will make them include their names on the question cards so that there is ownership for accuracy or the ability to be called upon for explanation. In fact, I may build in some type of reward/penalty for best and most useless questions as deemed by the class. I have a monthly “best of the best”* drawing which could come into play here.

English Language Arts

Papers #1 and #2

Line-ups and Corners

I have put these two structures together because I use them as quick, organizational strategies. While I know that you can use them in multi-tiered activities, I tend to use them as a quick in and out to get kids organized and involved.

I use line-ups to quickly organized kids into groups other than by number. “Counting off” to form groups seems to keep the kids in the same groups...even if you count off by different numbers. (I never really did figure out why...theoretically that shouldn’t happen...and yet is does) I line students up by age, birthdate month, height...whatever...to get them into truly random groups. From the line-up I can still count them off, or I may choose to “clump them” in a group with their neighbors. Either way, lineups are an excellent way to organize students.

I last used line-ups to group my College Credit English students. These students are a rather serious bunch. They are used to the “collegiate” note-taking and study skills which a four-year institution will require. That being said, they also appreciate surprise and movement. I lined my students up by height to have them break into presentation groups. This allowed them to chat, measure, and perhaps be grouped with people they would not normally work with. It truly energized them for the task of digesting and presenting sections of Poetics.

I like corners for discussing literature. Many times students will not want to commit to an opinion. When my ninth graders read the story “The Lady or the Tiger,” I made them first write a paragraph as to which they thought came out of the cage at the end, the lady or the tiger. (If the lady comes out, the courtier gets to marry her, much to the chagrin of his former girlfriend, the princess. If the tiger comes out, he is eaten, alive. The author does not finish the story for the reader.) After they wrote their paragraph, the students needed to take their paper and go to one corner if they thought the lady came out and to another if they thought the tiger came out. Once they went to their corners, students needed to validate their reasoning. They were bolstered by the confidence of those around them who shared the same opinion. I know that the discussion was more varied, with more people committing to their opinion than if I had not used “Corners.”