

Strategy Training: Reciprocal Teaching



Students learn much more when they teach each other than when the teacher does all of the teaching (Hattie, 2009). Students teaching each other is called reciprocal teaching, and it has the second biggest effect on student achievement of all the classroom processes—the biggest is formative evaluation. Reciprocal teaching involves asking students to predict difficulties, ask questions, summarize, and clarify readings in their textbooks for other students in their group. By teaching others, the reciprocal teacher has to think carefully about what is important and what will seem difficult for the other students to learn. Looking good and avoiding looking bad can motivate students to do a good job.

Why is it so effective?

The reason reciprocal teaching works so well is not because students are better teachers than trained professionals. Rather, teaching well requires the reciprocal teacher to master the material first. When it is your turn to teach, you will make an extra effort to master the material so that you can teach it effectively. In this way, the reciprocal teacher learns the material more completely than he or she would otherwise.

The students of the reciprocal teacher will usually do at least as well on the reading quizzes as they would if they had been taught by their regular teacher. They might even be more inclined to participate and ask questions when learning from peers.

If it is your turn to lead a group discussion, follow these steps.

Step 1: play the vocabulary card game

Each reading comes with a card game. Make sure that you have cut up the cards beforehand. Shuffle the deck. Pick up a card and read a definition. Give point to the first member of your group to answer with the term correctly. Keep track of the points. If nobody can guess correctly, tell everybody the answer and return the card to the deck. Once all the cards have been played, announce the winner.

Step 2: review the reading and lead a discussion by asking 4 clear questions

Make sure that you have read the text you intend to teach before you begin. Outline the key points and any vocabulary or expressions you think your group might have difficulty with. Pay special attention to the controversy, identifying arguments for and against. Invite the others to give their opinions and ideas by asking 4 open ended questions. The questions should aim to get the other group members to discuss, for example, the background to the controversy, the arguments for and against, and the future of the controversy.

Step 3: share sources

Make sure you have found at least two English language websites that would make useful sources while writing an argument essay. Identify the key points and how you think they could be used in constructing an argument essay with supporting arguments and counterarguments. End your lesson by asking your students to write a draft of an essay and bring it next week to share.

Reference

Hattie, J. A. C. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. London, UK: Routledge.