

Literacy Tips



Tips for middle school educators on various topics such as grammar, writing, reading, spelling, vocabulary, cooperative learning and more.

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Tip #9: Jigsawing with VIPs

It seems like there is always so much to cover in the curriculum and so little time to teach. If you are feeling this way, you might consider using the cooperative learning strategy called "jigsawing."

1. Preview the material you want to cover. This strategy can work with both narrative and expository text. Divide the material up into a certain number of logical chunks. The number of chunks determines how many students will be in each group. For example, you could have students read three separate articles about the Japanese - American internment during World War II, or you could choose to read just one of the articles and divide it up into three main chunks.
2. Divide students up into groups of three or whatever number you have predetermined. Distribute the reading material. Make sure students only have a copy of their own text in front of them. (This will save on Xeroxing. You also don't want students reading ahead into someone else's territory.) Tell them in advance that they will be teaching the rest of their group the content, so they are entirely responsible for making sure the information is taught correctly. Have them read silently digesting their piece of the puzzle.
3. Model for the students with your own think aloud how to pull out main ideas from a text. Demonstrate using fringed sticky notes. (Simply take a larger sized post it note and tear off 3-4 strips.) Show students how to mark up the text with this post-it note fringe. This is a very nice substitute for highlighting. Learning to use a highlighter effectively can be your mini-lesson another day. This strategy is called the V.I.P.'s (very important points). Students know they can only use 3-4 pieces of the fringe, so this will force them to evaluate their main ideas before choosing them.
4. As soon as every member of the group has had time to read and prepare, put student groups together. Jigsawing occurs because all three students are bringing together their unique information which in the end will result in a larger body of learning. In essence, they are putting together a jigsaw puzzle. I don't use this strategy a lot because I find that students don't get a deep understanding of all of the material this way; however, it is a great strategy to use for quickly overviewing a lot of information.



Variation for narrative text

Have you ever tried to have a class read a novel in an hour using jigsawing? This requires picking a novel with a strong internal organization, short chapters, and a plot that leaves the reader wondering at the end of each chapter. Find a novel meeting this criteria (ex. Wrinker by Jerry Spinelli) and give each student only one chapter of the novel to read and digest. You could do this with partners being responsible for one chapter, too. The student reads the chapter silently and prepares an oral retelling. Call on students in order so the novel is retold to the entire class. Think about the student who receives chapter 16 to read in isolation. He/she will not have the benefit of having read the first 15 chapters. This student will be motivated to find out what comes before and what comes after.

Source

V.I.P. (very important points) strategy from:

Hoyt, Linda. *Make It Real*. Portsmouth: Heinemann Publishers, 2002.

