Jigsaw Discussion
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Teaching Modality
Face-to-Face

Active Learning Technique
Steps

1. Divide students into small groups of 5 students. For a class with 25 students, this configuration will create five groups.

2. Choose a reading for each small group to study, plus two extra readings. The readings might be examples you want to use as models for an assignment or portray different perspectives on the same topic. They might be peer-reviewed journal articles to help students learn to read them. Use this exercise to share models for a quantitative analysis project students complete each semester.

In class, model annotations on the screen by pointing out main ideas, subtopics, supporting details, facts, data, and thesis statements. Additionally, I often have students identify descriptive writing, uses of personal anecdotes, phrase styles, headings, and any structures or concepts they can use in their own writing, discussions, or projects. Sometimes, I just have students identify strategies they admire and wish to practice.

3. For homework, assign the second extra reading and have students practice annotating it.

4. The next class period, divide students into the first group sets and have them discuss the practice reading and their annotations. This practice discussion helps students get to know each other and review their reading skills. About fifteen minutes before class ends, one group member should post their group annotations to a Padlet.

5. Go over the Padlet posts and discuss each group’s annotations and insights. Provide a few extra ideas, as well.

6. Have students write a one-minute paper about what they learned about annotating. Also, have them ask one question.

7. Before students leave, assign each group one of the five readings they will use for the jigsaw discussion. Tell students to read the reading carefully and annotate it for their group discussion during the next class period. Also ask students to write a very short summary of the article. Explain that after their first group discussion, members will divide up again into second groups. During the second half of the jigsaw discussion, each group member will share their article with other students who have each read different readings.

8. For the next class period, make sure the desks are arranged for groups of five, so students can get started right away. Spend the first half of class having small groups discuss the article they will teach to others during the second half of the jigsaw discussion.

9. While students discuss the article assigned to their group, formulate the second set of groups. Re-group students so every member shares a separate article, but if a few students are absent, there’s no harm if two students have read the same article.

10. Before students leave class, assign a writing prompt or presentation where students must use at least two articles out of the five to support their ideas. Also, have students write a jigsaw discussion journal entry.

Benefit to Student

1. Jigsaw discussions are a helpful way for students to review or learn close-reading skills.

2. Students enjoy discussing fellow students’ perspectives and learning from what stood out to others.

3. Readings come to life during discussions. Students could even dress up for the discussion like a character in the reading. (I haven’t done this, though.)

4. Since one of the best ways to learn is to teach, students learn more from their reading as they share it with the second group, while also gaining an overview of other readings they can use to support their writing.

5. Jigsaw discussions also encourage students to read like writers. Students help each other identify powerful, engaging rhetorical moves they would like to try out themselves. This encourages lifelong learning habits.