

Best Practice Packet – District 5

Fishbowl

Purpose

This methodology provides students with the opportunity to engage both verbally in an analytical discussion, as well as to listen critically while others speak.

Process/Description

- five desks placed in a circle in center of room and surrounded by remaining desks (circle-within-a-circle)
- discussion begins with prompt given by teacher or member of inside circle
- students in center participate in discussion while others acts as silent spectators/listeners
- teacher determines time for those in center to switch out with spectators

Role of the Teacher

- teacher may act as facilitator of discussion in center of circle
- teacher may also remove self from discussion entirely and simply act as "watchdog" to maintain integrity of fishbowl
- directs students in the assessment of fishbowl process based on following criteria (may be used as evaluation of individual performance):
 - Content: support of ideas with evidence from text, relevancy and insight of comments
 - Involvement: active participation when in center, discriminating listening when on outside, encouragement/opportunity given to other panelists to speak out
 - Language: appropriate use of grammar, vocabulary, and terminology
 - Speech: articulation, pronunciation, and projection; expressiveness in reading aloud

When to Use

- effective method of discussion with large group because it gives a "small seminar" feel to class
- effective method to use when class is dominated by a few highly verbal students; gives "quieter" students opportunity to participate and express ideas
- works well with content which requires close examination/analysis

Variations

- may use half the class in center of circle and half outside (play with the numbers of those participating)
- instead of teacher determining when speakers become spectators, and vice versa, students may tap the shoulder of speaker and take that person's place
- two chairs, diametrically opposed to one another, may be placed in between inside and outside circles; these two chairs are places where "silent" spectators may go to ask a question of or make comment to inside group

Inside--Outside (Tappers)

Purpose

This seminar process teaches not only good speaking habits but also good listening habits.

Process/Description

- Divide the group into two parts; one half sits in inner circle, and other half sits in outer circle
- Write on the board a thinking prompt central to the curriculum (a question or a controversial quotation is most effective); allow students 3 minutes to jot down their ideas and reactions to prompt
- Phase one: Inside discusses/outside listens (10 minutes)
Inside people discuss ideas about the prompt; outside people take notes, especially about what they might like to comment on later
- Phase two: Outside discusses what they have heard/inside listens
Two groups change seats
Current inside group comments on ideas heard earlier and adds critical reactions to discussion; current outside group takes notes especially in order to clarify because a comment was misunderstood
- Phase three: Everyone returns to original positions (5 minutes)
Inside group reacts to what was just said and adds new ideas to topic; outside group may only talk when asked a direct question

Role of the Teacher

- explains to students to take careful notes on other students' comments, to paraphrase other students, and to add high-level ideas to discussion
- takes notes every time a student speaks
- moderates when one person dominates
- moderates when several students speak at once
- encourages everyone to speak at least once
- encourages everyone to finish one topic before moving on to another topic
- grades students
 - 4 points for paraphrasing another student's comment, reacting critically to what was said, and coming up with original idea that may turn discussion in a different direction
 - 2 points for paraphrasing someone and reacting to what was said
 - 0 points for saying nothing

When to Use

- after students know each other fairly well
- for a poem, short story or other content that can be covered well in the given time
- when one student dominates a large class discussion
- when several students remain silent during an entire class
- effective when a topic requires high-level analysis

Variations

- Students do not need to actually change seats
- Any number of students may sit inside
- After phase two, the entire class may discuss
- Students may discuss a topic without the focusing prompt.

Jigsaw

Purpose

This method enables a group to process information from a substantial amount of reading without having to take the time to individually read the source.

Process/Description

- large group broken down into small group of 3-4 people
- each small group given a section of reading to do
- small groups read and discuss information; decide what info is most relevant and important to whole group
- small groups report to large group on findings while large group takes notes on information being reported

Role of the Teacher

- teacher divides class into small groups and distributes reading material
- teacher monitors small group discussions
- teacher acts as facilitator of discussion/questions between small group reports
- teacher may evaluate small group reports based on:
 - participation of all group members during info gathering stage
 - relevancy of material being reported
 - speaking ability when reporting to large group
 - ability to answer questions about info contained in report

When to Use

- best used when there is large amount of info and only relevant details need to be gleaned from material
- effective when time constraints prevent in-depth reading

Variation

- number of people in small groups may be changed to fit circumstance
- reconfigure groups so that new small groups created with a representative from each of the original groups; each member takes a turn reporting info from original group

Line-of-Opinion

Purpose

This technique allows students to express their opinions while seeing where they stand in relation to other members of the class.

Process/Description

present to students the topic/issue that is being discussed

designate two extremes related to the issue and indicate points in the room that represent these extremes

ask students to form a line between the two extremes based upon their opinions

select several students from different points along the line to share the reasons for their positions

ask students if anyone wishes to change positions along the line based upon the discussion that they have heard

Role of the Teacher

determine issue to be examined and designate extremes

act as facilitator for discussion

When to Use

effective means to introduce controversial issue

allows students to see where their opinions fit in relation to others

Variations

can be used at the beginning and conclusion of a unit/topic of discussion to determine impact of new information on opinions

can be used to introduce a topic for an opinion essay

Save the Last Word For Me

Purpose

This is an excellent strategy to encourage students to analyze and discuss an article with other students who have read the same article.

Special Requirements

- index cards (three per student)

Process/Description

- during or after reading, each student writes three quotes on three index cards
- on the reverse side of each card, the student writes why the quote is especially meaningful to him/her
- for discussion, each person holds up one card (quote out) and each other person in the group responds to it
- finally, the writer has the "last word," reading what he/she wrote on the back of the card
- repeat procedure with all group members and all three cards

Role of the Teacher

- teacher may act as facilitator for groups
- teacher may float between groups, listening but not participating in discussion
- teacher may assess students, based on participation in process and content of discussion

When to Use

- may be used to analyze a controversial or complex article
- may be used as a means of encouraging each student to participate in discussion and analysis; especially effective in larger classes

Variation

- may vary the number of quotes and responses required, depending on length of article or time constraints
- may also be used for video analysis (each student would record meaningful quotes from video and follow same procedure)

Silent Graffiti

Purpose

This process provides a non-threatening environment where all students participate and share their thoughts in an interactive written "discussion".

Process/Description

- students write on relevant journal prompt for five minutes
- students must remain silent for twenty minutes while participating in following activity:
 - individuals go to board and write ANY reaction to prompt that they wish (comment, question, reaction to other writing)
 - when not writing on board, students read what is being written on board and write reactions in journal
- towards end, students write notation from board which is most interesting to them in journals; may write reaction to notation
- five minute discussion at end on what they thought was most interesting quote
- five minute discussion on process of Silent Graffiti - what does it do for class? is it worthwhile?

Role of the Teacher

- teacher acts as monitor to be sure students are silent, and are participating by writing on board and/or journal
- teacher facilitates discussion at end of activity

When to Use

- good activity to break monotony of everyday class activity
- beneficial method when trying to teach students to maintain silent focus for determined amount of time

Variations

- can be used as an introductory activity for new unit
- can be used to check level of learning

Socratic Seminar

Purpose

This seminar process teaches good speaking habits, good listening habits, and close reading skills.

Process/Description

- Write an essential question covering the material assigned as homework. This essential question should be all-encompassing. Often it also has no one correct answer.
- Open up the discussion to center around this question. Students may answer in any order or in no order at all. They should take notes on what other students say, and they should respond specifically to comments made by their fellow classmates.
- The discussion continues until all of the major elements of the assignment and of the essential question have been discussed.

Role of the teacher

- Explains to students to take careful notes on other students' comments
 - Takes notes every time a student speaks, listing name of student, main insight, and level of thinking
 - Moderates when one person dominates
 - Encourages every student to speak at least once
 - Encourages the group to finish one topic before moving on to another topic
- grades students
- 4 points for reacting critically to another student's comment, reacting critically to what was said, or coming up with an original idea that lifts the discussion to a higher level of thinking or turns the discussion in a new direction
 - 2 points for responding to another student's comment or reacting to what was said
 - 0 points for saying nothing

When to use

- After students know each other quite well and are comfortable with each other
- For a poem, short story or other content that can be covered in the given time
- When one student dominates a class discussion
- When the topic lends itself to high level analysis

Variations

- Choose just a specific number of students to sit in the circle
- Students may create their own essential question
- The teacher may summarize the main ideas after the discussion
- The teacher may be a member of the circle