

Professor Know-It-All

There are many novel contexts for review and generative learning in the content classroom (Paris & Paris, 2001; Zimmerman, 2002). The best ones are those that position students as “experts” on topics to inform their peers and be challenged and held accountable by them (Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2000; Spratt & Leung, 2000). One such strategy is called *professor know-it-all*. As the name suggest, students assume roles of know-it-alls or experts who are to provide answers to questions posed by their classmates. This approach has many benefits. First, students must be well versed in the content; second, students learn to ask a variety of questions at different levels of difficulty; and third, the strategy requires active participation on the part of all students.

STEP BY STEP

1. Once coverage of content has been completed, the professor know-it-all strategy can be enacted. The strategy is appropriate after reading a short story, a chapter from a novel or textbook, a lecture

or presentation, a field trip, a film, or any other information source.

2. Form groups of three or four students. Give them time to review the content just covered. Tell them they will be called on randomly to come to the front of the room and provide "expert" answers to questions from their peers about the content.

3. Also ask the groups to generate 3-5 questions about the content they might anticipate being asked and that they can ask other experts.

4. To add a level of novelty to the strategy, some teachers keep on hand ties, graduation caps and gowns, lab coats, clip boards, or other symbols of professional expertise for students to don when it's their turn to be know-it-alls.

5. Call a group to the front of the room and ask them to face the class standing shoulder to shoulder.

6. Invite questions from the other groups. Students should ask their prepared questions first, then add others if more information is desired.

7. When the strategy is first employed, demonstrate with the class how you would like the professor know-it-alls to respond to their peers' questions.

Typically, students are asked to huddle after

receiving a question, discuss briefly how to answer it, then have the know-it-all spokesperson give the answer.

8. Remind students asking the questions to think carefully about the answers received and challenge or correct the professor know-it-alls if answers were not correct or need elaboration and amending.

9. After 5 minutes or so, ask a new group of professor know-it-alls to take their place in front of the class, and continue the process of students questioning students.

10. Initially, it may be necessary and helpful to model the various types of questions expected from students about the content. For example, students should ask the know-it-alls both factual and higher-level questions.

APPLICATION AND EXAMPLES

A health teacher employs the professor know-it-all strategy frequently to increase student engagement and increase the level of responsibility in their own learning. After the class read an article on the dangers of performance enhancement drugs, he asked students to form groups of

four. Each student was expected to become expert on a particular aspect of the article. Groups were also instructed to think up four good questions about the content of the article to ask the know-it-alls. Since the health class had experience with the strategy, students got to work quickly while the teacher rotated throughout the room answering questions and providing any requested assistance.

The teacher then called on a group to put on lab coats and assume their positions in the front of the classroom. Students from each of the other groups asked questions as did the teacher. The procedure for answering by the know-it-alls entailed gathering in a tight, closed circle to confer, decide on an answer, then recite the answer with each of the four students saying a word of a complete sentence. The teacher used this approach to reinforce the importance of thinking and speaking in complete thoughts.

For example, one of the questions asked the know-it-alls was the following: *What are the side effects of effects of taking steroids?* The response to this was: *The-side-effects-of-taking-steroids-include-different-kinds-of-cancer-sterility-and-psychological-disorders.*

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