

Independent Learners

Summary

Students will develop a sense of self through building confidence in their abilities to become independent learners. They will also develop those strategies needed to communicate their ideas and knowledge of concepts taught.

Materials

One per class:

- *The Squiggle*
Transparencies of [Visualization Drawings](#) (pdf)
Overhead projector

One per student:

- Small lap whiteboard with dry erase marker and eraser or small lap chalkboard with chalk and eraser
- Paper
- Pencil or crayons

Resources

Books:

- *Activating and Engaging Habits of Mind*
, by Arthur Costa and Bena Kallick;
ISBN 0-87120-369-3
- *Nurturing Independent Learners*
, by Donald Meichenbaum & Andrew Biemiller;
ISBN 1-57129-047-8
- *I Thought I Saw*
, by Pam Adams and Ceri Jones;
ISBN 0-85953-029-9
- *A Book of Ghosts*
, by Pam Adams and Ceri Jones;
ISBN 0-85953-028-0
- *There Was A Hill*
, by Lark Carrier;
ISBN 0-907234-70-4
- *Wing-A-Ding*
, by Lyn Littlefield Hoopes;
ISBN 0-316-37237-4
- *The Squiggle*
, by Carole Lexa Schaefer;
ISBN 061318193X

Organizations:

Integrated Strategies Program, Contact Pat Beckman, USOE, beckman@exolo.com 801-255-0791.

Background for Teachers

There are five basic steps in teaching children to become independent learners:

- Listen to Speaker

Ask Questions
Use Cues and Strategies
Check and Monitor Work
Set and Reach Goals

This activity is designed to help students develop a sense of self through building confidence in their abilities to become independent learners. It will develop those strategies needed to communicate their ideas and knowledge of concepts taught.

An independent learner is one who has developed a schema for learning, or who understands how s/he learns best. An independent learner has the ability to access cognitive and behavior strategies that make it easier to learn, remember, and relate what is learned. Strategic learning improves memories, including the ability to store and retrieve information. It increases student production and behavior, and heightens the level of the child's engagement in the learning process. Strategic learning promotes the development of the independent learner.

Although all children can benefit from this type of educational emphasis, children with learning difficulties will gain the most. Typically, they lack many of the important independent learning skills. They are not strategic in their approach to the learning task and consistently rely on others for help. Learning these strategies will help develop their sense of self.

Intended Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate a positive learning attitude.
3. Demonstrate responsible emotional and cognitive behaviors.

Instructional Procedures

Invitation to Learn

Draw part of a picture on the board before class begins, leaving out many details.

Have students:

Look at the picture on the board.

Decide what it might be.

Draw the completed picture on their own paper.

Have children share in whole group or pair share.

Instructional Procedures

Read *The Squiggle*.

Discuss the visualizing strategy (ability to see things in one's mind) in connection with *The Squiggle* and the pictures students drew.

Give each child a lap whiteboard (chalkboard). Explain that you are going to practice visualizing.

Place a transparency of *Visualization Drawing--Picture #1* on the overhead projector.

Verbalize what you see and let children verbalize what they see, emphasizing that the way one child verbalizes may be different from another--that's all right! Say whatever is going to help you make a picture in your mind so you can remember what you are looking at.

Close your eyes, verbalize what you see as you visualize the image in your mind, open your eyes, check the teacher's picture again.

Teacher covers the picture on overhead projector.

Students draw on their own whiteboard what they saw, verbalizing as they go along.

When everyone has finished, look at the picture on the overhead projector. Check to see if it matches student pictures.

Continue with the other drawings, noting that each one gets a little more difficult and more detailed. Children need to verbalize more to help them remember.

You may want to do a few pictures a day for a week until the children understand.

Extensions

Begin to relate visualizing and verbalizing with phonics and spelling skills (chunks), high frequency words, prediction of stories, patterns, and number skills.

There are more activities that extend the idea of this story inside the front and back cover of the *The Squiggle*.

Family Connections

When given directions at home, students can visualize those directions as they verbalize them to help them complete the tasks. This cognitive strategy keeps children engaged in the listening process and helps them know what to visualize next.

When parents read stories at home, children can visualize what they are hearing in the story, thus increasing the ability or willingness of the child to listen more purposefully.

Learning phone numbers and addresses is easier when children visualize and verbalize them.

Assessment Plan

Observation of student work on whiteboards is a good assessment of whether they understand the concept of visualization. Students become more proficient at visualizing and verbalizing each time practice activities are done. As observation occurs, record notes on paper to be placed in student portfolios. Evaluations and comparisons of notes taken can be made after each set of activities.

Bibliography

Research Basis

Beckman, P. & Weller, C (1990). Teaching Exceptional Children, 21/22, 26-29.

Active, independent learning for children with learning disabilities.

Leal, L., Crays, N., & Moely, B.E. (1985). Training Children to Use Self-monitoring Study Strategy in Preparation for Recalls: Maintenance and Generalization Effects. *Child Development*, 56(3). 643-653

Training children to use a self-monitoring study strategy in preparation for recall, maintenance, and generalization effects.

Authors

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