

General Education Cooperative Learning Strategies

Snowball

This cooperative-learning method has students work together in groups by answering questions from flip charts posted around the room. Students work collectively as peers in groups and work cooperatively to answer questions together. Team building activity for kids that encourages participation.

How to Use

1. Post flip chart papers around the room. Each page has a different question, sentence or prompt for input.
2. Students are divided into pairs or small groups and given a marker to respond on flip charts.
3. Each group is then put in front of a flip chart page and asked to collectively write their response on the sheet in front of them.
4. The teacher says aloud, "snowball" and each group rotate clockwise.
5. The groups then read what the previous group wrote and add new ideas or different views.
6. This process repeats until each group has participated on each flip chart.
7. Teacher leads a quizzing session.

When to Use

- Introduce new vocabulary before a unit to test their knowledge.
- Write test questions that will be on the next unit test.
- Use as a timeline of events or of people in history and put a date on each flip chart page.
- Use as writing prompts by encouraging creative writing.
- Use to assess their knowledge before they start a new chapter.

Variations

- You could have each group summarize the flip chart page they landed on and add more discussions for different viewpoints.
- Instead of questions you could request that each station complete a phase or step in a science project.

Wave Stretching

Students gather in a group to stretch all taking turns to start a new stretch. The idea is to pass the stretch as you go along. You can play this activity for however long you'd like; however, depending on the age and grade level, you may want to limit the number of stretches and eventually increase in number as they become more familiar with them game, or as they learn additional stretches.

How to Use

1. Students get in a large circle or in small group circles depending on space.
2. Pick a student in the circle and have them call out a stretch.
3. Going clockwise or counterclockwise each student does a stretch one by one.
4. When everyone has done that stretch and it gets to the student that called it out the next student calls out a new stretch.
5. Repeat until everyone has a turn.

When to Use

- This could be done every morning before classes begin to help the students moving using their senses.
- During a long lesson and/or content this could give the students a brain break.
- When the class is being disruptive, or you need to get them back on task.
- If students are not engaged, you could do the Wave Stretching getting them to focus when it's their turn.
- To practice listening skills and movement.

Variations

- Instead of wave stretching use other movements like hopping, jumping on one or two legs or clapping hands from one to the next.
- Another thing you could do instead of wave is say words to make a sentence or sentences to make a story or paragraph.

Balloon Bop

Students hold hands in a circle and tap a balloon around keeping it from touching the floor. For this to work effectively, students must work cooperatively, each focusing not to let their neighbor's hand go. They will soon figure out that they must all move together, as a circle, so they do not lose connection. If the balloon falls to the ground or a student taps the balloon with their feet, the count begins again. Depending on grade level, you can add more balloons to make it more challenging!

Before playing: Teacher can model how to tap the balloon lightly in order to keep the balloon up in the air. Try this with the students individually and then in partners. Once they are successful at keeping their balloon in the air without dropping their partner's hands, add more students to the group until they form one whole circle. Let the game begin!

How to Use

1. Students stand in a circle holding hands.
2. Teacher drops one balloon into the circle.
3. Students then try to tap the balloon in the air. To tap the balloon, they can use their hands, arms, heads, shoulders, chests, or knees but not their feet.
4. Goal is to keep the balloon up in the air without losing connection with students holding hands throughout.
5. Students will see how they need to all work together cooperatively.

When to Use

- This could be used before putting them in groups to complete an assignment.
- Before you start on a group project this could be used to promote teamwork.
- This could be used with younger students during Math for counting.
- Using this for science to explain force and motion.
- A lesson on trusting your neighbor.

Variations

- Instead of a balloon you could use a ball and complete the exercise outside.
- Divide into a couple circle and see who keeps object off the ground the longest.

All Aboard

Have students work cooperatively by strategizing together to fit in a smaller and smaller circle as a class. Eventually, the circle will be much too small to fit every student. The goal is for students to cooperate with each other and work close together to come up with creative solutions

Materials: Rope of varying lengths, music

How to Use

1. Tie a piece of rope in a loop that is big enough for every student to fit within it.
2. Lay the rope on the ground and have all your students sit inside a circle.
3. When all students are in within the rope praise them for working together to make sure they fit.
4. Then challenge to see if they can do better after making the rope smaller.
5. Lay the rope on the ground and have all your students sit inside the smaller circle.
6. Praise them again for completing the challenge of all of them fitting in the circle.
7. Continue making the rope smaller until they have exhausted space.

When to Use

- When watching your students, encourage and engage with them by asking questions so they get their problem-solving skills working.
- Have discussions about teambuilding and using problem-solving skills.
- Brainstorming ideas about authentic learning.
- Promotes teamwork before starting on a group project.
- To open communication with students on how they can't do everything individually.
- To represent that two heads are better than one before you put in pairs or groups to complete an assignment.

Variations

- Set a timer for them to work faster and improve communication.
- Assign leadership roles to quiet students to encourage participation. Have no one speak unless you are assigned leadership role.

Write Around

Teacher starts a sentence and each student takes turns writing a sentence. They pass their paper to the right, read the one they received, and add a sentence to that one. After a few rounds, great stories or synopses begin. Give children time to add a conclusion and/or edit their favorite one to share with the class.

How to Use

1. Students are placed in groups with 3 – 4 students and the teacher give each group a topic or idea.
2. Students then take turns writing their response to the question or idea on a piece of paper.
3. After time is up (given by the teacher) the teachers have students pass the paper to the next group.
4. Then this group reads over what the other group wrote and add to it or explain more.
5. The process repeats.

When to Use

- This is useful because it allows all students to demonstrate their contribution and knowledge regarding the topic.
- This should used during ELAR or writing journals.
- When teaching students about writing a short story and how to be creative.
- Students can use this when learning to review and edit rough drafts for their peers.
- Creative writing or summarization

Variations

- Another way to do this is put students' different groups and have them create multiple stories using the same first sentence given by the teacher.
- For younger grade levels K-2 you can start a drawing and have each student add a one drawing.

Four Corners

Students are given four choices with the teacher designating a corner for each choice. Students then go to the designated corner from one of the four choices. Promotes discussion and participation.

How to Use

1. Students are given four choices.
2. Students record their answers.
3. The teacher designates one corner for each choice.
4. Students travel to the appropriate corner.
5. Students pair up and discuss answers.

When to Use

- Reading: decide on four genres you want students to focus on. After students pick their genre, they write the title of 2-3 examples that fit the genre. Discuss in corner.
- Language Arts: students choose what season they think is best and support opinions.
- Math: give students four angles like straight, obtuse, acute or right.
- Science: give students four animals and have them choose one.

Variations

- Have students create their own four topics of discussion.