

## **PLANNING A COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE LESSON**

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Successfully involving students in text discussion requires a classroom environment that is supportive and encouraging. Teachers must set guidelines for student behavior regarding differing viewpoints, active listening, and refraining from making negative comments.

Efferent discussions require an efferent stance which involves the process and goal of extracting information from text. As the manager of an efferent discussion, it is important that the classroom teacher refrain from competing with text as the source of information during the discussion. Teachers need to remember that the discussion belongs to the students because the work of extracting information from text requires their efforts. It is their learning opportunity. The teacher sets the tone and pattern for discussion by the role that he or she assumes; therefore, the role of the teacher is to remain neutral. Effective contributions that a teacher can make to create an efferent discussion include:

- Leading students back to the text

- Challenging students to support their position or claim about the text

- Asking questions that guide students to question the text or their position/claim about the text

Any comments or body language that teachers display to discourage students from relying on the text as their primary source of information during discussion will derail the text extraction process and goal of an efferent discussion. Teachers need to know specifically what types of things they can say or do to sustain an efferent discussion. Any of the following are appropriate:

- Paraphrasing what they hear students say during discussion that may need clarification for the benefit of the listeners

- Posing a question to the entire group to grapple with an issue that the group may not have yet considered during the course of their discussion

- Pointing out some specific information from texts that are open to various interpretations, followed by a question such as, "What do you think the author was thinking when he/she wrote this?"

Discussion protocols are helpful guidelines for students and teachers to use in the process of conducting discussions. Teachers need to keep in mind the following when determining guidelines for efferent discussions:

The expectation of the text

The nature of the discussion

The type of interactivity required of the participants

The teacher should use the Efferent Discussion Protocol to set expectations for students and use them to redirect conversation that strays from the guidelines. They may also be used to develop rubrics for evaluating student performance during these discussions. Simply putting students in pairs or groups is not sufficient for improving comprehension. The type of discussion is very important, and there must be structures in place to stimulate discussion. Simple structures, such as numbered heads and think-pair-share, enhance student participation and accountability and are easily incorporated into the sequence of instruction. There are many other ideas for structures teachers can use to keep students engaged and motivated. Two examples adapted from the book *Total Participation Techniques* are described below. **Bounce Cards:** Students consider the ideas of their peers and share their own idea off of it (develop or expand the idea). Students summarize the information shared by their peers (rephrase) and make comments on specific parts. Students raise inquiry about what their peers share. The teacher should practice modeling a good conversation and the “wrong way” to hold a conversation prior to having students engage in this activity. **Point of View Team Carousel:** The teacher creates a prompt that requires students to utilize their judgment and the content presented to take a position; this is recorded on the board so that students can refer to it as they fill in the boxes to the template. Students record their judgment and a rationale for what they believe in the first box. Students then pass their papers to the right, and read and add a supporting rationale that goes along with their peer’s judgment (even if they don’t agree). Students are then asked to pass their papers to the right, and read what is in both of their peers’ boxes and add something that might be used as an opposing rationale (whether they agree with the rationale or not). Students are then asked to pass their papers to the right and add their own opinion, supporting it with their rationale, in the final box. Students are asked to give the papers back to their original owners. Volunteers are called upon to share with the class some of the arguments for and against on their carousel forms.

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#### USED LITERATURE:

1. Ainslie, Susan. (1994). *Mixed Ability Teaching: Meeting Learners.needs. Network 3: Teaching Language to Adults*. London: Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research.
2. Baker, Joanna. (2000). *The English language teacher's handbook: how to teach large classes with few resources*. New York: Continuum; London: Cassel.