

Learning Activity: Taking notes

Learning Behaviours: *Independent learning*

Teacher: *BEB* DATE: *8 /8/05*

Class: *9D science*

Task 1: WRITING ON READING

As outlined on the PEEL CD.

Task 2: MAKING YOUR OWN NOTES

Individually students are to summarise text based around their own 'Writing on Reading'.

Task 3: ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Students were asked to a linear scale marked 0 to 10 and place a cross on that scale to indicate where their level of understanding lay.

In groups of four, and using their notes made in task 2, students answer a set of externally set comprehension style questions based on the text that has been worked with.

Students were again asked to make a linear marked scale and to indicate with a cross where their level of understanding now lay.

Discussion Tool: *Journal Writing*

Set stems in journals.

Student Comments

TAKING NOTES

What I was asked to do was:

- *Read the text and highlight or underline on the sheet anything I didn't understand*
- *To read that sheet at under line things we did not understand.*
- *Read off the sheet and do the questions.*
- *Highlight important info. or things we didn't know. Work in groups and explain. Write notes.*
- *Write out what I understand. Answer the questions. Do the scale.*

I think that the purpose of the task was to:

- *Get an understanding on how much we knew, what we don't know.*
- *Make you think about the body and to see what was going on in our heads.*
- *Find out more about cells.*
- *See what we didn't understand and make the info. clearer.*
- *Try and understand what to do.*

This approach helped me.....

- *Understand where I'm at and what I know and don't know, I did find it hard to read and say what I didn't know!*

- *Finding out things I didn't know.*
- *See what I didn't understand.*
- *To learn better*

These parts (aspects) that I didn't find so helpful were.....

- *Underlining what I don't know, it's a new aspect of learning and I am used to need help go straight to the teacher and get the answer!*
- *Not know what things were like unicells and multicells.*
- *Explaining it to other people confused me more.*
- *The scale.*

I think that we could have made this approach better by.....

- *Reading it and discussing as a class to see other peoples understanding. They may explain something we didn't understand.*
- *Being explained more.*
- *Talking more about it after.*
- *Getting the teacher to explain it rather than other kids.*
- *Doing it as a class.*

Teacher Journal

TAKING NOTES

Background:

This is a form based science class who have included science in their timetable this semester. We are in week 4 and have just 6 lessons per fortnight. There are no set table groups although students tend to sit in the same (or similar) places each class.

I am finding this class a challenge for a number of reasons. As can be expected, there a number of students who continuously disrupt the class, a number who are frequently unprepared for class (so learning has little continuity), a small number who 'do nothing', and a large number who are quite content to learn but don't get too excited!

There most recent homework assignment has been to visit the local supermarket or butcher and take note of the appearance and texture of an animal's heart. We are studying cells and are looking at the specialisation of cells to form tissue and the grouping of tissue to form organs, hence the heart focus for homework. I am hoping that this task will be more successful in getting greater student participation than the comprehension task.

Aim:

I have already given a read and answer questions (comprehension) type task for homework with the hope that students would be able to cover this part of the course out side the classroom. After correcting the work that some of them did (8 out of 22 handed in this homework task!), I realised that many of the 8 did not really understand the concepts that were being relayed, even though simply and clearly covered in the text. My aim, therefore, is to cover the particular concept/s in a different manner to instil understanding.

Method:

I want to return to the basic comprehension type approach that the homework task was based around to revisit these concepts. I think that at this stage it is important to not only be concerned with the concepts here but also with the way in which students approach this type of activity. My LSF focus is with students being able to evaluate 'where they are' with regards to their understanding at any given time. To be able to assess their level

of knowledge and understanding and then to be proactive in attempting to complete that knowledge and understanding.

I have a different comprehension task (a better one?) that I want to students to work with in 3 different ways.

1. Writing on reading.

This method requires students to read an article and to actively contribute to the article by adding relevant information, making written comments that come to mind while reading, recording questions that mentally arise while reading and to highlight significant sections of the article.

2. Making your own notes.

My aim here is to have students summarise the published text and their 'Writing on reading' additions to record notes on the topic being covered that they have constructed themselves. To do this in a comprehensive manner I think that as a class we will need to discuss the 'Writing on reading' additions prior to 'Making your own notes'. It will be important to not criticise or discount comments, but equally important to address questions and queries regarding this approach.

3. Responding to comprehension questions.

Here my aim is to have students respond in written form (I'm aware that there is a lot of writing involved in these approaches) to pre printed questions based on the concepts being addressed. These responses are to complete the notes made and will address detail and variations that students may have missed.

What happened:

Following initial instructions students generally settled to task (some weren't sure and needed further direction). As I walked around I could see that many students struggled to identify main points to highlight and didn't make many comments in the columns. Does this mean that when reading they are looking at words but not actually mentally processing the information? I suspect for some the answer is yes!

When it came to making their own notes many students were more in their comfort zone and were able to record fairly valuable information. There was a huge range in quantity with some students verging on rewriting the printed material.

Answering the comprehension questions proved to another challenge, but in a different way. While students were familiar and comfortable with this approach they were still having difficulty analysing what the question was asking. While walking around the room and talking with different groups of students I was able to rephrase some questions for them which allowed them to move forward.

So, a couple of points to take on board:

- Reading for students often means looking at words but not necessarily processing the information (inactive learning)
- Students have difficulty recognising what is being asked rather than knowing the answer.

Student Journals

I found the student journals really interesting to read. I commented on 'sticky notes' for most students as feedback for them.

As I read I realised that these students are quick to grasp what the approach taken is all about and at times tended to paraphrase information back in their journals. Maybe I'm being a bit quick to judge, it just feels that how some are reporting is not necessarily their own thoughts but what they think I want to hear. I will need to be more careful next time as I introduce the activity.

Generally though student journals gave positive, helpful information that I can work with for the next activity.

We have continued to reinforce the concepts of cells, tissues, organs and systems in class and I think that along with these activities their understanding has improved.