



Implementing Best Practices & Educating Lawyers: Teaching Skills and Professionalism Across the Curriculum

Workshop IC

Learning is Social

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Description:

This workshop will begin with a summary of Vygotsky's educational theory regarding the social aspect of learning, followed by information on and participation in *ten* interactive instructional strategies (ISS). Attendees will *participate in* several ISS *while learning about* using them. The interactive instructional strategies used in the workshop include Think-Pair-Square; Jigsaw; Carousel; Structured Controversy; Human Continuum; Defining Features Matrix; Self-Assessment; Cooperative Assessment, and Muddiest Point. The presenters use these strategies in their classrooms regularly and will provide each attendee with the information necessary to implement the strategies in his or her own classrooms.

Welcome and Introduction to Vygotsky:

Lev Vygotsky was a Russian educational theorist who did most of his writing in the 1920s. Vygotsky was a constructivist, and believed that to internalize new information, individuals must connect the new information to past experience and prior knowledge. In other words, he believed that learning is an *action* – a cognitive activity in which the learner takes in new information and uses it to construct meaning.

Good instruction, then, is not merely the transfer of information. Instead, it requires the learner's *active* participation in a joint enterprise with the instructor in which new meanings are constructed.

Many standard modes of instruction are passive. We have all experienced classrooms in which the teacher does the talking and the students passively listen. In these classrooms, the focus is on the teacher – what will she say, what will he do? In a constructivist classroom, the students are at the center of the process; the focus is not on what the teacher will do or say but on what the *students say and do*. For Vygotsky, the role of the educator is to engage the student in *active learning* – not necessarily physically active learning, although that can be good too, but cognitively active learning through social interaction. Interactive instructional strategies, such as the ones you will experience in today's session, promote active learning by allowing students to engage with the material *during* the class – to read, write, talk, listen, and reflect *during* class. These instructional strategies also give students the opportunity to clarify, question, apply, and consolidate new knowledge.

Vygotsky considered the phrase “active learning” redundant. For Vygotsky all learning is active, and you cannot learn anything passively. Good educators, then, use *effective* and *efficient* instructional strategies that give students the opportunity to actively construct knowledge – to interact with the material in the classroom.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY 1: **THINK-PAIR**

What is it?

A Think-Pair is a social learning activity in which the facilitator poses a question, either orally or on the board/overhead, and asks students first to think about the question on their own and then to pair with another student to discuss it.

ACTION: Take 1 minute to think about your reaction to Vygotsky's perspective on social learning.

ACTION: Turn to your neighbor and take 2 minutes to share your reactions to Vygotsky's perspective on social learning.

Good to Know:

Why use Pairs? To engage all the students in the classroom rather than the one or two you are dialoguing with at a given moment. A student cannot get left out of a dyad! Pairs encourage more thoughtful participation and allow for participation by students who need a minute to think before responding.

When should you use Pairs? Anytime! Build it into your Socratic Dialogue. Pairs are especially useful when energy is flagging or when students seem "stumped."

How much time does Pairs take? 2-3 minutes.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY 2: **PAIR²**

What is it?

Pair² is a social learning activity in which the facilitator asks a pair of students to join another pair to continue discussing the question that was posed in the original pair or a related, higher-level question.

ACTION: Join another pair and share your reactions to Vygotsky's perspective and your experiences with social learning activities. You have 4 minutes.

Good to Know:

Why use Pair²? To provide additional perspective to the discussion by adding two more people to the group and to encourage students who don't always participate.

When should you use Pair²? Following a Pair.

How much time does Pair² take? 3-5 minutes

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY 3: **JIGSAW**

What is it?

Jigsaw is a strategy that uses two stages of small-group work to help students learn one topic comprehensively. First, students are divided into "expert" groups, each of which is assigned to learn one aspect of the topic. Next, students move into "jigsaw" groups, composed of at least one member from each expert group, and take turns teaching the group the material on which they are experts.

ACTION: Each Pair² will be an "expert" group with a designated shape. When instructed, turn to the page that corresponds to your expert group's shape, and follow the instructions on that page.

Good to Know:

Why use Jigsaw? To share expertise and gain a more complete understanding of a topic than time would permit if students were assigned to learn the topic individually.

When should you use Jigsaw? When dealing with a topic that can be cleanly divided into parts. Jigsaw can be used with any size group.

How much time does it take? Depends on the complexity of the topic and the amount of info students must read to become experts.

★ ★ STAR EXPERT GROUP ★ ★

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY 4: STRUCTURED CONTROVERSY

ACTION: You have 10 minutes to learn about and plan an instructional activity using Structured Controversy.

What is it?

A Structured Controversy is a social learning activity that allows students to discuss a controversial issue from divergent viewpoints. Structured Controversies require students to identify the arguments supporting a particular position, present and advocate a position, reverse perspectives, and arrive at a resolution of the issue on which the group can agree.

How does it work?

1. Select a topic about which students can have differing viewpoints.
2. Assign students to groups of four and divide each group into pairs.
3. Assign each pair one side of the controversy.
4. Instruct each pair to identify the arguments that support its position and to prepare a short presentation.
5. If students have not reviewed the topic ahead of time, allow students time to review the relevant doctrine.
6. Have pairs take turns presenting their position to each other.
7. Instruct students that they may take notes and ask questions during the opposing pair's presentation, but may not debate or disagree.
8. After each pair presents its position, have the pairs switch sides of the controversy and repeat the process from the opposite viewpoint.
9. Then, allow time for students in each foursome to discuss the issue freely, trying to find points of agreement.
10. Instruct the group to synthesize the best arguments from *both* positions into a new position on which the group can agree.
11. Have each foursome present its group's position to the entire class, making sure each member of the foursome participates.

Good to Know:

- Structured Controversy may be used
 - To review a controversial topic –a topic on which students can have at least two divergent positions.
 - To promote critical thinking –the ability to see the strengths and weaknesses of both sides of an issue.
 - To develop higher-level reasoning skills by requiring students to confront intellectual conflict.
 - To improve advocacy skills.
 - To develop the ability to synthesize divergent positions.
 - To develop the ability to reconceptualize one's position.
- Sally has used Structured Controversy in small Constitutional Law–Powers classes. She gave students a hypothetical in which Petitioners challenged an executive order and asked them to take turns representing the litigants' positions and to come to a consensus on which position was stronger.

WHEN INSTRUCTED, TURN TO PAGE 7.

◆ ◆ DIAMOND EXPERT GROUP ◆ ◆

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY 5: CAROUSEL

ACTION:

You have 10 minutes to learn about and plan an instructional activity using Carousel.

What is it?

Carousel is a social learning activity that can be used for brainstorming or review. Students are assigned to small groups that rotate through stations, much like a carousel. At each station, students generate ideas or answer questions.

How does it work?

1. Determine the number of stations (topics/questions) you will have.
2. Write a different topic or question on the top of pieces of large chart paper.
3. Hang the chart paper around the room at well-spaced intervals creating “stations.”
4. Assign equal numbers of students to each station. Groups of two to four are ideal.
5. Groups discuss the topic or question at their station.
6. Each group records its response on the chart paper. (Provide different colored markers to each group.)
7. As you call time (time will vary depending on the objective), each group stops writing, takes its marker, and moves to the next station.
8. At each new station, the groups read the chart papers and add new responses and/or make notes or comments on other groups’ responses.
9. Repeat until each group has been at every station.
10. Suggested reflective/processing activities: Once groups have returned to their original chart station:
 - a. Ask each group to highlight the three most important ideas listed on its chart paper and then share those with the larger group;
 - b. Ask each group to categorize/summarize the information on its chart paper and share with larger group; or
 - c. Have students return to their seats and go around to each chart paper and ask probing questions.

Good to Know:

- New groups may not write something that a previous group has written. This ensures that each group reads the ideas of the other groups. By the third or fourth rotation, you may need to extend the times so groups can read and discuss what has been added to the papers.
- You do not always need to keep time. You can provide an allotted time for students to move through all the stations.
- You can have more groups than you have stations. Some groups can stand back and discuss the subtopic and then step up to the chart paper when it is available.
- Mary Pat has used this activity in seminars to generate small group discussion and also in larger classes to review material at the end of a unit.
- Sally has used this activity in small classes, putting short hypotheticals related to one topic on the chart paper and asking each group to give a “yes” or “no” answer and explain a question posed at the end of the hypothetical.

WHEN INSTRUCTED, TURN TO PAGE 7.

■ ■ SQUARE EXPERT GROUP ■ ■

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY 6: DEFINING FEATURES MATRIX

ACTION:

You have 10 minutes to learn about and plan an instructional activity using a Defining Features Matrix.

What is it?

A Defining Features Matrix is a social learning activity that requires students to explore how sets of concepts are related to one another. Working with a chart or grid, students use their reasoning skills to compare and contrast concepts.

How does it work?

1. Create a matrix.
 - Across the top, list the key concepts, cases, themes, etc.
 - Along the left side, write the features or characteristics that these concepts might share.
2. Assign the students to pairs or small groups.
3. If the concept is associated with the feature or characteristic, the students record a (+) in the cell. If the feature is not associated with the concept, the students record a (-) in the cell.
4. Encourage students to explain the rationale behind their choices.
5. Encourage students to add additional features or characteristics that occur to them as they work through the grid.
6. When the grid is completed have the students analyze the information by:
 - Discussing the similarities and differences;
 - Discussing any new information discovered about the concepts; or
 - Noting which cells are still blank and considering what information is needed to complete those cells.

Example:

	FDR	JFK	Nixon	Reagan	Clinton
Democrat	+	+	-	-	+
War Time President	+	-	+	-	-
Re-Elected	+	-	+	+	+
Served in Congress	-	+	+	-	-

Good to Know:

- This is a great activity for visual learners and helps all students organize information.
- Mary Pat has used this activity in Constitutional Law to discuss suspect classes under equal protection and Torts when covering proximate cause.

WHEN INSTRUCTED, TURN TO PAGE 7.

● ● CIRCLE EXPERT GROUP ● ●

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY 7: HUMAN CONTINUUM

ACTION: You have 10 minutes to plan an instructional activity using a Human Continuum.

What is it?

A Human Continuum is a social learning activity that requires students to communicate, negotiate, and form and defend their positions. Students are given index cards on which the facilitator has written a concept, topic, or other item of information. Students are then asked to line themselves up in a particular order specified by the facilitator.

As a simple example, an elementary schoolteacher might give a group of children index cards, each of which has a picture of a snack item (*e.g.* apple, cupcake, granola bar, etc.). The students then line themselves up in order of most healthy snack to least healthy snack.

How does it work?

1. Create 10-12 index cards, each with a different concept or phrase (if you have more than 10-12 students, you can create multiple sets of the cards and have multiple groups).
2. Give each student an index card.
3. Give the students the opportunity to line themselves up, in the order you've specified, by negotiating their placements. This should be a fast-paced activity.
4. Ask the students to explain why they have placed themselves in that particular order.

Good to Know:

- A human continuum can be done with the whole class, a group of students in front of the class, or multiple groups of students simultaneously.
- Students do not need to be given cards; they can form a continuum using their own opinions. For example, you can ask the students to form a line from most supportive of the Supreme Court's willingness to uphold restrictions on obscenity to least supportive.
- This exercise is a great way to get students moving while they learn. Remember, we have kinesthetic learners in our classes, too!
- Morgan has used this activity in Basic Federal Income Tax to illustrate the amorphous distinction between business expenses (which are deductible) and personal expenses (which are not).

WHEN INSTRUCTED, TURN TO PAGE 7

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JIGSAW (continued)

ACTION:

You now have 2 minutes to form Jigsaw groups of four members each. Form groups with members of the *same color*, but *different shapes*. For example, each red group should have 1 red star, 1 red square, 1 red circle, and 1 red diamond.

JIGSAW (continued)

ACTION:

Members of each Jigsaw group have 15 minutes (total) to take turns teaching the other members of the group the instructional strategy on which they are experts, by presenting the lesson they created with their expert group.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY 8: MUDDIEST POINT

What is it?

The Muddiest Point is an instructional strategy that allows professors to determine what students understood least well during a particular class. At the same time, The Muddiest Point allows *students* to determine what they understood least well and need to focus on. To implement The Muddiest Point professors simply ask students, during or at the end of a class, to respond to the following question: “What is/was the muddiest point in this class?”

ACTION:

You have 2 minutes to reflect on today’s session and write down on an index card provided what was the muddiest point for you.

Good to Know:

- The Muddiest Point can be done with the whole class, a group of students in front of the class, or multiple groups of students simultaneously.
- You can ask for the muddiest points during class, collect the responses, and discuss them before class ends.
- You can ask for the muddiest points at the end of class, collect the responses, and decide on a format for addressing the muddiest points. For example, you could discuss them at the beginning of the next class, prepare a handout to distribute at the next class, post your answers (or just the questions) on the course’s Web page, or respond to the Muddiest Points via an e-mail to the class.
- To turn the Muddiest Point into a social learning activity, have the students write down their muddiest point and then turn to their neighbor or form small groups to discuss their questions with each other.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY 9: **INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT**

ACTION: You have 2 minutes to answer the following questions.

1. What instructional strategy discussed in today's session would you use to address a controversial topic?
2. What instructional strategy discussed in today's session would you use to address the needs of visual learners?
3. What instructional strategy discussed in today's session would you use to review information at the end of a topic or unit?
4. What instructional strategy discussed in today's session would you use to conduct brainstorming activities?
5. What instructional strategy discussed in today's session would you use to address the needs of kinesthetic learners?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY 10: **COOPERATIVE ASSESSMENT**

ACTION: You have 30 seconds to form a group with 2 or 3 people you have not yet met. You have 4 minutes to discuss your answers to the self-assessment questions and to reach a consensus on each question.

1. What instructional strategy discussed in today's session would you use to address a controversial topic?
2. What instructional strategy discussed in today's session would you use to address the needs of visual learners?
3. What instructional strategy discussed in today's session would you use to review information at the end of a topic or unit?
4. What instructional strategy discussed in today's session would you use to conduct brainstorming activities?
5. What instructional strategy discussed in today's session would you use to address the needs of kinesthetic learners?

Good to Know:

- Taking an assessment cooperatively immediately after taking it individually is a great way for students to check their knowledge and have to explain the rationale for their answers.
- Mary Pat gives individual assessment at the end of each unit, collects them, puts the students in small groups, and has the group take the exact same assessment together. The students' grades are based 50% on the individual assessment and 50% on the cooperative assessment.