

In the know ...

Co-Operative Learning – Kagan Style

I'm sure most staff will remember that we have had training on using Kagan structures in the dim and distant past, but how often have you used Kagan recently? Probably not for a while. Louise Murtha and I went on a 2-day training course recently and we were reminded why Kagan works.



Kagan structures can help:

- young people to develop social skills, teamwork and collaboration;
- teachers to incorporate challenge and deeper thinking skills in lessons;
- improve self-esteem and confidence;
- close the achievement gap.

The structures work with all ages and most subjects and you might remember some of the strategies used e.g.

- Mix-pair-share: class mixes until teacher calls 'pair'. Students discuss teacher's question.
- Round robin: in pairs/teams, students take turns responding orally (related strategies include: all write round robin; think, write round robin; timed round robin).
- 3 step interview: a interviews b; b interviews a; each report back to group.
- Quiz quiz trade: find a partner and ask them your question; coach partner (t4 – give tip, 2nd tip, teach, praise) if the answer is wrong; when they get it right, swap card and find another partner.
- Numbered heads together: after writing own answer to a question, team mates put 'heads together' to ensure all members can answer, teacher calls a number and student shares (with backing of team).

Research supports using co-operative learning structures like Kagan; all students achieve more during co-operative learning than when working alone.

We are looking for volunteers to form a learning and teaching sub-group who are interested in using the structures, perhaps to meet fortnightly and share experiences and tips – Louise has been using the structures since September and has seen it make a difference.

You could engage with the structures easily after assessing the students through the Christmas exams – we will show you how you can group the students to make the most of co-operative learning.

Watch this space for a meeting to be announced early in the term.

Valerie Pasco

Memory Recall: Bartlett's 'War of the Ghosts'

Bartlett had people read the story "War of the Ghosts" and then he tested their recall over intervals varying between 15 minutes and 10 years later. He found, of course, that the longer the delay before testing, the less accurate people were. But the most important result concerned the nature of people's inaccuracies.

Bartlett saw how the memory errors people made tended to focus around the unfamiliar elements. People's recall was better for things they had a good model of (such as the hunting expedition), but bad for things that they didn't have a model for (such as the ghosts or the strange wound one of the men receives). These elements got dropped, or distorted in their memories, so as to fit with reasonable expectations.

Bartlett's studies showed that memory is a constructive process, a web of associations from which accurate memories – and plausible false memories – are rebuilt as they are needed.

The moral for learning is that you can't just slot new memories in like writing files to a computer. You need to integrate them into what you already know, making connections between old and new information if you're going to successfully recall them.

Valerie Pasco