

SYNECTICS (BRAINSTORMING)

Based on excerpts from *The Expert Educator* (Jones, et al. , 1994)

Definition and Description

Synecetic exercises encourage greater creativity and allow students to use metaphors, analogies and compressed conflicts to create a paradigm shift in thinking. Alternatives to typical classroom thought processes are allowed to emerge as students begin to use right brain functions. The exercise may be used to make the familiar strange, or to take the familiar and see it in a totally new perspective.

Advantages and Special Purposes

1. Increases creativity in individuals and groups.
2. Works well as a cooperative learning exercise.
3. Encourages community togetherness.
4. Allows divergent thinking processes.
5. Reaches students with different learning styles.
6. Allows for use of imagination and the senses.
7. Useful in problem solving and brainstorming endeavors.
8. Broadens concept attainment.

Disadvantages or Limitations

1. Vocabulary of the model may inhibit students. Terms like synectics, metaphor, analogy and compressed conflict may be imposing at any grade level.
2. The number of steps required to conclude the exercises number as many as 17 procedures and may intimidate a teacher.
3. Students trained in the rigors of left brain concrete sequential thinking may be temporarily stretched out of their comfort zone.

Guidelines for Maximum Utilization

1. Lesson planning time must be spent to carefully develop a flow of the steps to be taken.
2. The teacher must have an eye on time limitations and plan accordingly.
3. Explain the vocabulary of the model and the steps to be taken as they are taken.
4. Be sure to allow for full participation of all students.
5. Have questions and transitions ready in advance to facilitate the flow of the lesson and encourage spontaneity.
6. Encourage openness and creative expression.

7. Accept all responses.
8. Help students stretch their thinking.
9. Be willing to move through a variety of phases depending on the model to be used.

Example of a Model

Phase 1: Describe what we have before us---the present condition.

Phase 2: Suggest direct analogies to the present condition and describe it further.

Phase 3: Let's become the analogy we have selected in Phase 2.

Phase 4: From our discussion in Phases 2 and 3 let us suggest several compressed conflicts and choose one.

Phase 5: Allow the compressed conflict to inspire yet another analogy.

Phase 6: Move back to the original task or problem and use the last analogy or the entire experience to proceed with a new mindset.

Summary

Synecitic exercises can be used to develop creative thinking or creative writing skills, explore social problems, or solve problems. The exercises lead to concept attainment, expanding concepts and to discovery and invention. The process encourages group cohesion and generates energy in the classroom. Shared experience fosters interpersonal understanding and community spirit.