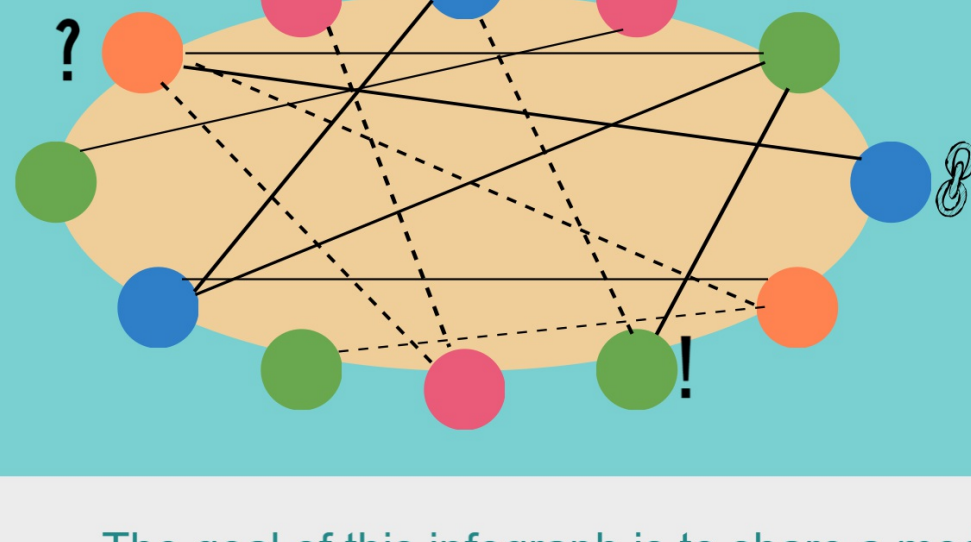


Teaching ELLs to Read Critically

Through Collaborative Discussions



The goal of this infographic is to share a model of structuring a student-led discussion. The model is designed to allow ELs to collaboratively construct meaning and critically analyze text.

Benefits of Discussions

- Increases critical thinking skills
- Develops collaborative learning skills
- Fosters greater engagement in content
- Allows students to explore different perspectives
- Teaches respect for other students' voices and experiences (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005).



Research Suggests

- Education researcher, John Hattie conducted the largest evidence-based meta-analysis to study the most effective practices that improve learning.

- His research found that classroom discussion was ranked the seventh most effective strategy out of 150 possible strategies used to improve learning (2012).



- Wilen (2004) said, "As an instructional method, discussion is a natural, powerful, and effective approach to engage students in critical thinking, decision making, and problem solving, all of which are deemed essential prerequisites to responsible and competent citizenship."

The Process



This process is adapted from Phillips Exeter Academy's Harkness Discussion method

1

View the Stimulus

- Students read or view the stimulus.

The stimulus can be:

- a song
- an image
- a video clip
- section of text



2

Generate Questions

- Students write questions that they genuinely do not know the answer to and want answered.

Students write one question per sticky note.

Students rate the difficulty of each question from a 1-5 scale, one is the easiest and 5 is the most difficult.

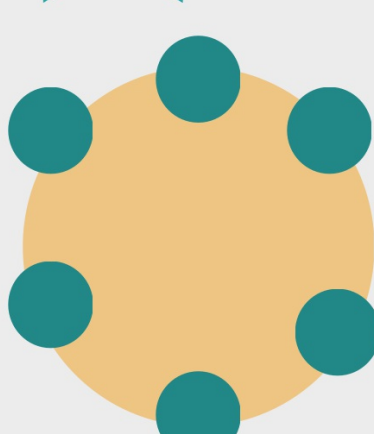


3

Sit in a Circle

- Students sit in a circle facing each other because it naturally fosters conversation.

If the class cannot all fit together in one big circle, make smaller circles of 4-8 students.



4

Discuss

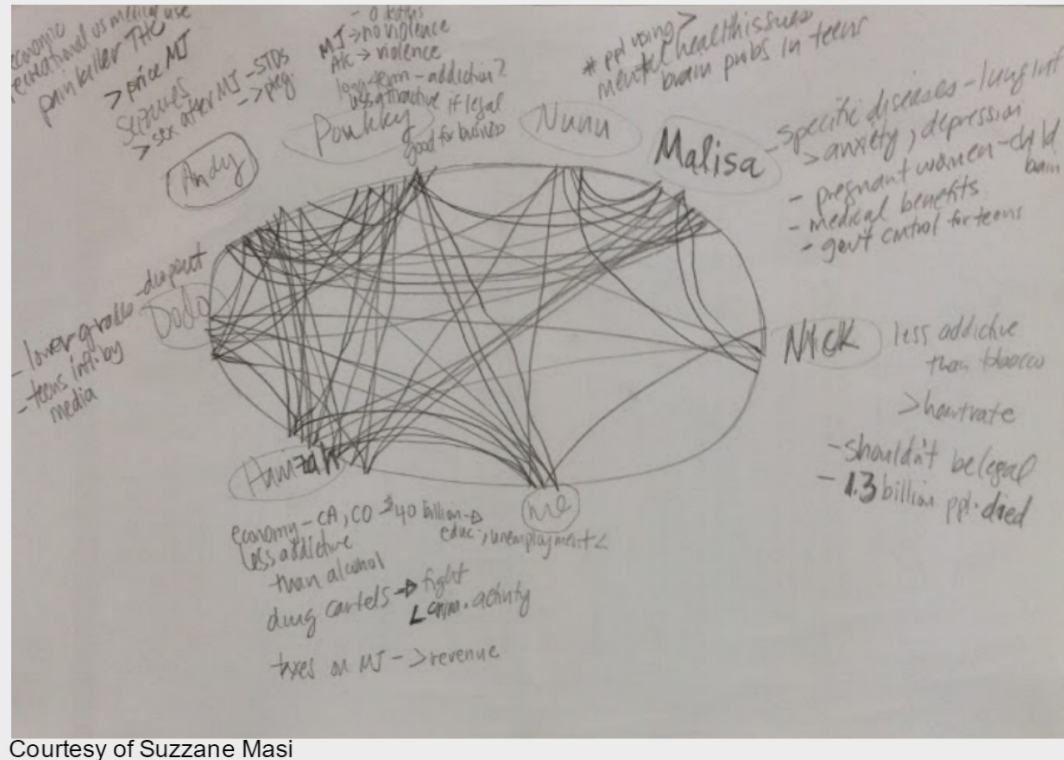
- ELs start with the questions rated as "1" first.

Students work collaboratively to provide answers and evaluate each other's ideas.

Then proceed to the next level questions.



Teacher's Role



Courtesy of Suzzane Masi

- Reinforce the steps in the process.

Intervene when students are attacked rather than having their ideas challenged.

Use lines to track the flow of the conversation (who's speaking to whom and how often) and record insightful contributions.

Praise ELs for making connections, providing evidence, showing critical thinking, or acting with maturity.



Take Aways

1. Discussions are powerful instructional tools.
2. Student-centered, student-lead, and collaborative discussions teach ELs critical thinking, improve their social skills, and allow them to develop an increased access to content.
3. Teachers can design a process that students can follow to have dynamic, thoughtful discussions.



EmpoweringELLs.com



Brookfield, Stephen, and Stephen Preskill. Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005. Print.

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