

Triad Stations at Different Times in a Mini-Lesson

Instructional Purpose: Activate background knowledge, generate questions, and summarize learning

Group Learning Routines ensure that all learners are engaged and benefit from mini-lessons offered by the teacher. It is challenging for a teacher to activate widely diverse background knowledge, answer questions, and check for understanding for each individual student and keep the lesson moving fast enough to finish on time.

Before the Mini-Lesson

Triads – See, Think, Wonder

Share with students a sample problem, a list of critical vocabulary words, a representative image or quote, or a writing prompt. Invite students to form triad groups and using “rounds” to collect ideas from the group members identifying what group members see in the example or information given, what it makes him/her think about, and questions that come-up. A recorder will write down the names of the group members and the questions that come-up. Whenever someone says something that another group member does not see or understand the doubting group member makes a time-out sign and it is time for the group to talk about this idea until everyone sees and understands. At the end of about five minutes, the group ranks the questions that were posed identifying the ones that are most important for the teacher to answer. Using a domino share each group shares out their top question until all of the questions are now listed on the board.

During the Mini-Lesson

The teacher can immediately tailor how time is spent in the mini-lesson based on the questions that have been posed and the conversations that were heard. The teacher can point out or ask students when questions can be crossed-off the list because the mini-lesson answered the question. During the mini-lesson students might be invited to share with an elbow partner one question that has been answered or to summarize the mini-lesson for their partner. Then the partner can repeat the summary adding a detail or question to make it even more complete.

Sum-it Up

At the end of the lesson students may have a short exchange with an elbow partner or return to the triad stations to summarize the mini-lesson and cross-off questions that can now be answered.

Using triads and elbow partners shouldn't take longer than the teacher calling on one student at a time with hands raised and repeating the mini-lesson because some students were lost and other bored. The opening triad discussions enable a teacher to know exactly what background knowledge students are using to connect this new learning. Making the content knowledge foundation visible for both students and teachers will make teaching and learning more efficient.

Variations:

Before the mini-lesson: **Know & Question** (using rounds, list as many things as you can in 3 minutes that you know about (topic of the mini-lesson)).

During or after the mini-lesson: **Say it Again** (using rounds, the first person repeats what the teacher said, then the second person repeats what the first person said and adds a detail or question, the third person repeats the second person and adds a detail or question. A variation can be that the third person points out what was different in the two ‘Say it Agains’ that were heard.