

20 Numbered Heads Together

Purpose

Numbered heads together (Kagan, 1994) is especially effective in “decreasing the learning gap” for English learners because all learners in a group are held equally responsible and have motivation to support one another’s learning (High, 1993).

Target learning strategies

- Summarizing
- Retelling
- Synthesizing
- Negotiating meaning
- Reviewing
- Problem-solving

Procedure

1. Have students work in groups of about four. Students in each group number off, one to four. (If groups have five, two students take turns as one number. If groups have three, one student has two numbers.)
2. Ask questions about the reading and give a time limit. After students have learned the strategy well, a student can ask a question instead.
3. Students take a few minutes to “put their heads together” to find and agree on an answer. This may include looking in the text.
4. Give a number to designate which student will answer for the team.
5. Students with that number give their group’s answer verbally, on paper, or on the board.
6. Give feedback as appropriate. Teams may receive points for correct answers, creative answers, correct spelling, and so on.

Variations: This activity is extremely versatile and can be used with higher-order thinking activities. Instead of answering questions, students can brainstorm ideas, solve a problem, draw a diagram, or even invent a product.