INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES



Spotlight Questioning

This strategy is used when all students are expected to be ready to respond to a question at any time. Students are given a question or series of questions with time to develop a response in preparation for being called on to be in the “spotlight.” The class then offers feedback to each student’s response. Research shows that it is often the same few students who volunteer to answer questions. This strategy gives all students an opportunity to be heard.

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SPOTLIGHT QUESTIONING

Summary

It is important to build a safe classroom environment where not knowing the answer is not met with ridicule and where the same students will not be called on repeatedly. Before implementing this strategy, prepare how you plan to call on students randomly or how to make it appear random. The student in the “spotlight” is expected to answer the question. Decide how you want the “spotlight” represented. You could place 1–5 chairs at the front of the room; you could have 1–5 students stand at the front of the room; you could have students stay in their seats, etc. There are many options with this strategy, but the key elements are a nurturing classroom culture where students are given time to develop a response.

Procedure

1. Tell students that you are going to ask a question or series of questions about a specific topic and that different students will be asked to be "in the spotlight" to respond to the question(s).
2. Explain how you have set up the "spotlight(s)" in your classroom and reassure students that this is a judgment-free classroom.
3. Provide all students with the question(s) and give them time to develop their responses. Consider giving students sentence starters to help with responses (i.e., "I think that…", "This reminds me of…", "This is how I started…", etc.).
4. Randomly call on students to be in the "spotlight" and have them share their responses to the question(s).
5. After one student responds, have the class give the student feedback on their response by agreeing or disagreeing. (This could be done by asking students to give thumbs up/down, raising hands, etc.) Consider asking a few students to share why they agree or disagree.
6. Repeat steps 4–5 as needed.

Adapted from: Keeley, P., & Tobey, C. R. (2011). Mathematics Formative Assessment: 75 Practical Strategies For Linking Assessment, Instruction, and Learning. Corwin, A SAGE Publications Company.