INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES



Thinking Hats

This strategy is a role-playing model that has students discuss a topic using the lens or perspective represented by their “hat.” It can be used for brainstorming, decision-making, giving feedback, reading comprehension, or problem-solving. Thinking Hats supports active participation from all group members, the need for having healthy disagreements, and the exploration of different perspectives.

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THINKING HATS

Summary

Students “wear” different hats for a discussion. The detective (white) hat represents the person who values facts, the creative (green) hat has a no-bad-ideas attitude, the optimistic (yellow) hat finds value in others’ ideas, the thoughtful (red) hat considers feelings, the cautious (black) hat identifies risks, and the conductor (blue) hat summarizes ideas. The goal is to spiral into a consensus.

Procedure

1. Select a topic or problem that needs more than one perspective and does not have one correct answer.
2. Have students get into groups of six.
3. Before you explain the purpose of each hat, have students each pick a hat. If there are uneven groups, consider having a couple of students “wear more than one hat.”
4. Explain the roles of each hat to the class, and give each student or group a copy of the attached **Roles** handout to use as easy reference.
5. Share the selected topic or problem from Step 1 with the class.
6. Direct students to “wear” their hat and write an opening statement on their handout or on a piece of notebook paper.
7. Have students share their opening statements with their groups in the following sequence: white, green, yellow, red, black, then blue. Then have students continue sharing, using their hat to guide their perspective in an open discussion until time is up.
8. Once time is up or the groups have a final idea, decision, or solution, have students wearing the blue (conductor) hats summarize and take turns sharing with the whole class.

If this is your first time using this strategy, consider having students practice by asking a fun question such as, *Is a hot dog a sandwich?* You might also consider assigning each small group a hat to “wear” to help students learn the process. Then have each group share their perspective with the whole class.

Adapted from deBono, E. (1999). Six thinking hats. Back Bay Books.