

Mod2_InspiringDiv_Philip_Haitz

I tried the following divergent thinking techniques in my classroom and have learned from my experiences.

The first two divergent thinking strategy I tried were “Fast, Frequent failures”. I thought this would be a good strategy to implement in a math classroom because in a math classroom we are looking for right answers and use the wrong answers to guide students thinking when applied to mathematics. Students had and have no problems blurting out anything that came into their mind as I was looking for a correct answer or something that would help us to solve the problem at hand. Some students were on topic while others were not. While I enjoy sarcasm and can appreciate a good sarcastic comment I tried to keep a straight face and hide my anger, not showing judgement as some students called out ridiculous answers. This was challenging as the answers grew more and more off task and I had to end the activity by guiding the students to the answer that I was looking for. I assumed that ruling out wrong answers would lead my middle school students to the right answer. While some students were on task and participated correctly others took the opportunity to make inappropriate comments and derail my divergent thinking activity. Next time I will lay down some ground rules about off task answers as I found not all students understood the expectations. I have learned the value of mistakes by trying this activity.

The second strategy I tried was to “Defer Judgement”. When asking students to answer questions, I gave no hint if their answers were correct or not. I took many students answers, some were correct while others were not. I recorded several answers and asked students to determine which one was correct. This brought about some good conversation between group members as they tried to defend their answers. Through the group conversations students could rule out incorrect answers and come to an agreement on a single correct answer as a group. This strategy seemed to really work for me as the majority of the learning took place in the groups as the students discussed their thinking strategies trying to prove that they were right.

I also tried to implement the “Reversing the Question/Answer Paradigm”, which is instead of asking questions to which there is a correct answer, ask students to create the problem. I used this strategy as we were solving equations in the form of word problems. Students were able solve multi step equations, but when they were written in word problem

form, students struggled with pulling out the information to make the equation. Students had to create multi step equations based off a single answer. Working backwards students could identify key terms that signaled different operations and were able to create interesting stories to go with their multi step equations they created. This worked well for most students and through group discussions and collaboration, students could pull out the important information in the word problems to solve them correctly. Next time I may just start with this divergent thinking strategy to teach the lesson as students enjoyed creating their own word problems to be solved with equations.

I would also like to implement the “Let it play” strategy to help students build more acceptance of each other in the classroom. This strategy involves letting students play music of their choice for a period for the whole class to listen to and learn to withhold judgment. Too many times in my classroom students put down each other when a wrong answer is given or an idea is off topic. I am trying to create an environment in which judgment of each other is deferred, restrained, and more thoughtful. This is challenging in the middle school environment as thinking outside the box is considered not cool. When students are not afraid of being immediately judged by others, they are more likely to share ideas and opinions and therefore become less afraid to be divergent in their thinking and learning.