**Jigsaw**

**Background**

Jigsaw is a strategy that emphasizes cooperative learning by providing students an opportunity to actively help each other build comprehension. Use this technique to assign students to reading groups composed of varying skill levels. Each group member is responsible for becoming an "expert" on one section of the assigned material and then "teaching" it to the other members of the team.

**Benefits**

Jigsaw is a well-established method for encouraging group sharing and learning of specific content.

Jigsaw helps students learn cooperation as group members share responsibility for each other's learning by using critical thinking and social skills to complete an assignment. Subsequently, this strategy helps to improve listening, communication, and problem-solving skills.

Monitoring each student's participation within the groups provides teachers with information about how much the students already know about the topic. This allows teachers to tailor instruction accordingly.

**Create the strategy**

Teachers can use the following steps when developing the jigsaw strategy for a class:

1. Introduce the technique and the topic to be studied.
2. Assign each student to a "home group" of 3-5 students who reflect a range of reading abilities.
3. Determine a set of reading selections and assign one selection to each student.
4. Create "expert groups" that consist of students across "home groups" who will read the same selection.
5. Give all students a framework for managing their time on the various parts of the jigsaw task.
6. Provide key questions to help the "expert groups" gather information in their particular area.
7. Provide materials and resources necessary for all students to learn about their topics and become "experts".
8. Discuss the rules for reconvening into "home groups" and provide guidelines as each "expert" reports the information learned.
9. Prepare a summary chart or graphic organizer for each "home group" as a guide for organizing the experts' information report.
10. Remind students that "home group" members are responsible to learn all content from one another.

**Note:** It is important that students have experience with small group learning skills before participating in the jigsaw strategy. It is also important that the reading material assigned is at appropriate instructional levels.

**Use the strategy**

Students are directed to read the selection of text assigned to them. When the reading has been completed, the students meet for approximately 20 minutes with others assigned to the same topic. They discuss the material, identify the most important learning points, and return to their "home groups" to instruct the others about information in which they have become an "expert". Each student takes turns teaching what he or she has learned to the other "home group" members.

During this process teachers should:

1. circulate to ensure that groups are on task and managing their work well;
2. ask groups to stop and think about how they are checking for everyone's understanding and ensuring that everyone's voice is heard; and
3. monitor the comprehension of the group members by asking questions and rephrasing information until it is clear that all group members understand the points.

If appropriate, have students fill out a graphic organizer in the "home group" to gather all the information presented by each "expert". "Home groups" then present results to the entire class, or they may participate in some assessment activity.