"Do First" Predictions

WHY

Thinking Nation uses predictions in many of its units. Having students predict before learning is an effective teaching strategy because it engages their curiosity, activates prior knowledge, and prepares their minds to absorb new information. Here's why it works:

Engages Curiosity: When students make predictions, they become invested in the learning process because they want to find out if their guesses are correct. This natural curiosity motivates them to pay closer attention to the lesson.

Activates Prior Knowledge: Predictions require students to draw on what they already know. This helps them connect new information to existing knowledge, making the material more meaningful and easier to understand.

Encourages Critical Thinking: Predicting prompts students to analyze information and consider possibilities, which enhances their problem-solving and reasoning skills.

Provides a Purpose for Learning: When students predict, they have a goal—confirming or revising their assumptions. This focus helps them engage more actively with the material.

Promotes Deeper Learning: Research shows that when predictions are tested and corrected, students remember the information better. The cognitive effort involved in making and revising predictions strengthens memory and understanding.

In practice, you might ask students to predict the outcome of a historical event, the meaning of a scientific phenomenon, or the next step in a math problem. Following up with the actual lesson encourages them to assess and refine their thinking, leading to a richer learning experience.

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How

Steps to Implement the Prediction Strategy

1. Prepare the Material
   - Select a text, picture, or chart that relates to the topic students will study.
   - Ensure the material provides enough context to provoke thought but does not give away the answers.

2. Introduce the Activity
   - Provide students with the material and ask them to analyze it briefly.
   - Pose an open-ended question to prompt their predictions. Examples:
     - "How do you think people might have felt during [historical event]?"
     - "Why do you think [specific outcome] happened?"

3. Record Predictions
   - Have students write their predictions on a sheet of paper or an index card.
   - Encourage thoughtful responses by reminding students there are no "right" or "wrong" predictions at this stage.

4. Examples of Predictions
   - Example 1: The American Revolution
     - Material: A brief text about the first clashes of the war.
     - Prediction Question: "How might colonists and British soldiers react to the initial clashes?"
     - Sample Predictions:
       - "I think the American soldiers might feel scared because they are fighting trained soldiers."
       - "I think some British soldiers might feel they don't want to die so far from home."

As students progress through the lesson or unit, revisit their predictions. Encourage them to confirm or revise their predictions based on what they've learned.Some confirmations or revisions can happen immediately, while others may occur later in the unit.