

The Jigsaw Method Teaching Strategy

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October 18, 2016 / Teaching Strategies

(Updated on January 15, 2021)

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The jigsaw method of teaching is a strategy first developed by Elliot Aronson in 1971 and further advanced in assessment practices by Robert Slavin in 1986. Aronson developed this method as means to assist students overcoming learning gaps in recently desegregated schools in Austin, Texas (Teaching Methods). For the past 50 years, teachers have been utilizing this method and its various components to promote collaboration in early grades through post-secondary classroom settings.

What is Jigsaw Method of Teaching?

Just as a jigsaw puzzle is a collection of various pieces that come together to make a complete picture, the jigsaw method of teaching is a collection of topics, which will be fully developed by students before coming together to make a complete idea. To be more specific, this type of cooperative learning strategy allows individuals or small groups to become responsible for a subcategory of a larger topic. After researching and developing their idea, each individual or small group then has the responsibility to teach it to the rest of the group or class.

Benefits of the Jigsaw Method in Education

There are many benefits to using the jigsaw method in one's classroom. For starters, in most instances, students who take ownership in their learning will better understand the material. As active learners, students are directly immersed in the information and material, which promotes a deeper understanding of that material.

When students are given the opportunity to **contribute to a group** (<https://www.teachhub.com/classroom-management/2020/09/benefits-of-group-work/>), they also learn life skills such as communication and working within a timeline. This method also promotes collaboration and discussion, as well as self-motivated

learning strategies. Students who work together learn to ask questions to clarify their understanding and provide critical feedback in appropriate manners. In addition, the jigsaw method in education effectively produces academic gains in problem solving and analyzing, two important cognitive skills.

What Material can be Used in the Jigsaw Method?

While most think of the jigsaw method being used to teach subcategories of a specific overarching lesson, it can be even simpler than that. Each group could be responsible for a section of the textbook chapter, a specific strategy for a math concept, the culture of a county within a region, a chapter of a trade book, or even analyzing poetry or other works of art.

Jigsaw Method Examples to Try in Your Classroom

Individual Pieces

For virtual classrooms or younger students, it may be easiest to start using this method as individuals who then come together to present their piece of the puzzle. A teacher would start by assigning each student a subcategory to research. The teacher may ask each child to create a slide presentation to then share with the class that fully develops their subcategory. This can also be done within the traditional classroom if the overall lesson has enough subcategories, or if the teacher chooses to let two to four students work independently on the same subcategory and share separately to provide a more in-depth look at each subcategory.

Cooperative Groups

As with any group activity, the teacher will divide students into groups of four or five students. The number of groups should be based on the number of subcategories that fit into the overarching lesson; then divide the number of students into groups accordingly. Each group would then be given a subcategory to **cooperatively research and develop** (<https://www.teachhub.com/teaching-strategies/2020/07/cooperative-learning-and-how-to-use-it-in-the-classroom/>). As with the individual's approach, each group would then create a presentation and share it with the entire class.

Jigsaw within Groups

Similar to the cooperative group approach, this example allows each member of the small group to develop a subcategory and share within their small group. In order to start this method, the teacher would divide the lesson into subcategories. Then each small group would be created with one student receiving one subcategory of the lesson. For this method, each small group gets the same set of subcategories.

Once individuals have researched their own subcategory, they will meet with individuals from the other small groups with the same topic to better develop their understanding and become experts of the subcategory. Each student would then return to their original group and teach their subcategory to the rest of their small group. Students within the group take notes or fill-in a study guide to fully understand all subcategories. This also works well for students who are learning to work with a group but may not yet be comfortable speaking in front of a whole class.

Assessment Guidelines

No matter the type of jigsaw method used, all **students will need to be assessed** (<https://www.graduateprogram.org/2020/12/what-questions-should-student-assessment-results-answer/>) on all subcategories at the end of the lesson so that the teacher knows what material might need to be retaught by the teacher. This assessment is also meant to ensure that all students gained an understanding of the entire content, not just their expert piece of the puzzle. In most instances, the teacher will most likely choose to give each individual their own individual score based on their assessment. However, for the jigsaw within groups method, the teacher may take each student's individual score and average it with the other members of the small group. Each member of the small group would then receive that average in addition to their own individual score. This helps ensure that all students work cooperatively to teach the material and hold each other accountable. This method of scoring is more suitable for higher grades and for students with a full understanding of their role in the jigsaw method.

It is a proven understanding that anytime someone is given the opportunity to teach information, they personally gain a deeper understanding of the material. The jigsaw method, whether used at an individual or cooperative group level, allows for this peer-teaching opportunity. Students become invested in what they are responsible for teaching and for what they learn, which deepens their knowledge and application of the skill. The jigsaw method is a valuable educational strategy to use at any grade level.

Reference:

Teaching Methods: A Collection of Pedagogic Techniques and Example Activities. Retrieved 1-7-2021:
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**Updated January, 2021*

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