

Instruction Construction

Strategies That Build Student Understanding

Name of Strategy: Sum It Up!

Brief Description: Summarizing is how we take larger selections of text and reduce them to their bare essentials: the gist, the key ideas, the main points that are worth noting and remembering. Webster's Dictionary calls a summary the "general idea in brief form"; it's the distillation, condensation, or reduction of a larger work into its primary notions. The strategy is designed to help students learn to be succinct in the summarization process.

Intended Purpose: The purpose is to teach students how to strip away the extra verbiage and extraneous examples while summarizing information by forcing them to focus on the main ideas and the crucial details necessary for supporting them.

How To/ Steps:

1. Have students imagine they are placing a classified ad or sending a telegram, where every word used costs them money. Tell them each word costs 10 cents, and they have only \$2.00 to spend, which means they have to write a summary that has no more than 20 words.
2. Provide copies of the directions and "Sum It Up" graphic organizer for students.
3. Students will read the entire selection (chapter, article, handout, primary source, etc.) and, as they read, they are directed to list the main ideas on the "Sum It Up" handout.
4. As a final reflection, students should "sum it up" in a sentence with no more than 20 words!

Approximate Time: You can adjust the amount of time students have to spend, and therefore the length of the summary, according to the text they are summarizing.

Tips: This activity can also be adapted with a "Text Messaging" theme, which is certainly more real for our students today!

Tags for Searching: Summarization, Reflection

Attachment Description: There are two attachments for this strategy; student directions and a graphic organizer.

Variations of Use: Consider setting this up as a learning station, with articles in a folder for students to use as practice whenever they finish their work early or have extra time when other students are still working. In other words, this strategy could be used as a great anchor activity.

References or Resources:
<http://www.readingquest.org/strat/summarize.html>

Strategy Category:
Reflect and Respond / Reinforce the Foundation

Subcategory: Summarization