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Kellie Pilalis

Illinois Wesleyan University

Leah Nillas, Faculty Advisor

Illinois Wesleyan University

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Using Strategies to Promote and Increase Critical Thinking Abilities

Kellie Pilalis and Leah Nillas*

Educational Studies, Illinois Wesleyan University

Research Question

- ★ How can different strategies be used to promote and increase students' critical thinking abilities?
- ★ **Critical Thinking** refers to the "mode of thinking which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully analyzing, assessing, and reconstructing it" (Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2013, p. 1).

Literature Review

- ★ There are significant gains in critical thinking for all students; the largest effect sizes were found in reading (Duesbery, 2015).
- ★ Students need to be accountable for their own learning in order to become critical thinkers (Fischbaugh, 2004).
- ★ Critical thinking skills can lead to increased academic rigor and deeper comprehension when students are mentally challenged to strive to learn more (Kenney, 2013).
- ★ Responding to and creating critical thinking questions, reading, writing, speaking, and listening are all integrated to help students think about texts in deeper ways (Taylor & Peterson, 2012).

Methodology

- ★ Participants included 26 fourth grade students in a small rural school.
- ★ Data was collected from field observations and reflections, lesson and unit plans, pre and post self-assessment, and group evaluations.
- ★ Themes were identified through repetition, similarities and differences, missing data, indigenous typologies, and linguistic connectors (Ryan & Bernard, 2003).
- ★ Common themes across all data sources were analyzed to provide evidence that students' reading comprehension and critical thinking abilities improved.

What is one thing you would like to get better at in lit group conferences?

When it is my turn to be leader I want to try and ask even better questions.

Figure 1. Students are holding themselves accountable and setting goals for the future.

What do you do well in lit group conferences?

I do a good job staying on topic and participating during our conferences. I also give pretty thoughtful answers and get people back on topic if they are not on topic. My group does a good job of asking good thinking questions and giving good, thoughtful answers.

Figure 2. Students are beginning to notice what is taking place during their conferences.

Results and Data Analysis

- ★ Students became aware of their actions and participation during literature group conferences (see Figures 1 and 2).
- ★ Classroom data findings showed an increase in reading comprehension, responding to critical thinking questions, creating critical thinking questions, students were more prepared, and more participation.
- ★ Modeling during lessons was beneficial for all students.
- ★ Students began applying critical thinking skills in conjunction with the existing curriculum.

Conclusion

- ★ Through coaching, modeling, and perseverance, literature group conferences became more meaningful and thoughtful.
- ★ Students were able to create and respond to critical thinking questions; which increased comprehension.
- ★ Future research is needed to determine different strategies to promote and increase students' critical thinking abilities.