**Writing Break Strategy**

Studies have shown that students recall information at a higher rate when they write about the information presented, and then talk about it. So this is a simple strategy that can be used when you’re asking students to read, pay attention to a presentation, or when they’re involved in activities. This can be used at intervals of 20 minutes to half hour by simply asking student to stop and take a paper and pencil out and write about what they’ve just seen, heard or read. The idea is for them to process what they’ve just experienced and then you can ask them to share with a partner or the whole class. Our level of comprehension is always deepened when we write about a topic or have a conversation about it. It’s often a good idea to ask specific questions to illicit a more thoughtful response.

**Here are some suggested questions:**

* What do you think is the most important thing you read or heard, and why?
* Did you have any “Aha” moments as you read?
* What in the reading or activity surprises you?
* What do you agree with?
* What do you disagree with?
* Does this remind you of something else?
* What thoughts came to your mind as you heard or read the information?
* Does it make sense to you?
* What questions do you have, what don’t you understand?

Prompts can also be more specific to the content for example, What about the Gettysburg Address surprised you the most? How would you feel if you were the plastic bottle – recycled or thrown out? One teacher describes it this way, “Writing breaks are a reminder to me to just shut up every once in a while and just think.” (Daniels et. al p. 31)

This is a good way to break up a long lab, chapter, or lecture into bite size chunks in order to increase students’ understanding and ability to remember. The pair sharing also allows them to clarify their understanding, get deeper understanding from their peers, and it has the social aspect that is so motivating for students. It helps to walk around the room as students are writing, either giving them encouragement or other prompts if they’re stuck, to send the message that this is an important activity.

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