

Recreating Multiple Choice for Deeper Learning & More Fun (Method 2)

Purpose

Use the choices in multiple choice (MC) problems to deepen discussion and address misconceptions

Why?

Every teacher has access to lots of multiple choice problems that are tied to their standards. Having lots of problems is a good thing. But there are several drawbacks to using MC problems just as they are.

Drawbacks from a teaching point of view:

- It's hard to tell what kinds of errors students are making just by looking at their answer choices.
- Students often don't show their work when completing MC problems.
- Working MC problems doesn't lead to academic discussion.
- Copying MC problems takes lots of paper and ink. In other words, they're expensive.

Drawbacks from a student point of view:

- MC problems are boring.
- MC problems feel like a test even when they aren't.
- MC problems don't provide a good practice of skills.

Rethinking the way MC problems are used solves all these issues.

Setting Up the Activity

1. Choose several MC problems that address the same concept.
2. Highlight the correct answer. Then cut the answer choices apart.
3. Put each answer choice in a different envelope and write the problem number and letter of the answer choice on the outside of the envelope (e.g., 2A or 2B). Mix the envelopes up and post them around the room.
4. Copy one set of problems for each group of 2–3 students.
5. Gather white boards, markers, and erasers for each student.

How to Do the Activity with Your Students

1. Place students in groups of 2–3. Hand out problems, white boards, markers, and erasers.
2. Have each group choose a runner.
3. Explain that students will work a problem, find the posted envelope labeled with their answer, and check the envelope to see if they got it right. Tell them that the correct answer is highlighted.

4. Assign each group a different problem to start on. This is important because you don't want all of the groups going for the same envelope at once.
5. Each group works the problem together and agrees on an answer. The runner looks around the room for the envelope with the same answer, goes to the envelope, and pulls the answer from it.
6. The runner determines if his group got the problem right or wrong and then *secretly* and *quietly* tells the result. If they got it correct, they do another problem. If they were incorrect, they discuss what they might have gotten wrong, rework it, and check their answer again.
7. After students have worked all the problems, ask if any of the problems were more tricky than others. Have students discuss what was tricky about the problems and how they figured out the solutions.

Options

- Post a list of academic vocabulary words on the board for students to use during their team discussions.