

WHY STUDENT MODELING IS SO IMPORTANT

by:

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Modeling can be such a powerful strategy that the most successful teachers rely on it more than any other method. If done correctly, your students will accurately copy everything you model. The key is to model in a way that allows them to imagine themselves along your chosen path. You must visualize each step of the process before it can be realized. This visualization requires skilled performance by you and one of your students. One of the most important steps in effective modeling is to choose a student who will follow your lead and mimic your movements down to the last detail. This student becomes a "role model" for the rest of the class. Why is this important? Because it proves to the rest of the class that it's possible. It proves that one can complete a task, routine, or goal just like the teacher, without help. This gives students no excuses before they try it for themselves. This says better than anything else that they are expected not to follow your instructions but to mirror them in every way. You will have students role model you immediately after the lesson to help them stay attentive and perform at their best. Recognize that the lesson's success depends on the selected students' performance. Therefore, pay particular attention to your presentation and strive for clarity, specificity, intrigue, and humor.

The goal regarding selection is for it to be non-issue. The goal is to develop your skills as a role model and classroom leader to the point where you can pick names from a hat. Some teachers say to pick only students you know will do well. Others say it's more effective to choose the most challenging students.

The problem with either approach is that students' attention is compromised when they know they are unlikely to be selected. Use secrecy to lure your students. Knowing it could happen to anyone keeps everyone on their guard. If you still need to select randomly, one solution is to have multiple students model, one at a time or together if possible.

Group modeling can also be effective. If you were a fly on the wall of the most effective teachers whose students seemed mysteriously independent, focused, and on task, you would know that they spend much of their day modeling and are very good at it. No matter what you teach or what grade level you want to achieve, it would help if you modeled everything you want your students to be able to do -- every transition, every task. The end goal of modeling is for students to become independent learners and be able to work independently on assignments and tasks.

References: