

Using Learning Stations

Introduction

A learning station is a self-contained, physical location in the classroom or on campus in which students engage in an individual or group learning experience. Each learning station houses information and materials related to a concept to be learned. Learning stations allow the students to focus on concepts, skills, themes, or topics and to work either alone or with others to process, discover, and unpackage information. Allowing the students time to deepen their understanding of individual concepts through writing, reflecting, creating artwork, participating in hands-on activities, or other methods facilitates the learning process, especially when exercises are designed to engage the students in a variety of learning styles. The students can focus, make connections, and generate ideas for future learning.

Learning stations are especially beneficial when the students are learning several concepts in one unit or lesson. Moving from one learning station to another helps the students to master each concept in a multi-concept unit. They can take a close look at several concepts one by one, which allows them to use a similar learning pattern to focus on each new concept. Teacher planning and modeling help to ensure the success of learning stations.

Method

1. Prepare learning stations carefully.
 - Determine the appropriate content and number of stations needed to accommodate the variety of material presented in the unit (i.e., themes, learning styles, subjects).
 - Assess the space available. Decide on the number of students assigned to each learning station, and create an appropriate space for each learning station (e.g., classroom space, outside space, library space).
 - Determine the order of the learning stations, including the desired rotation from one to the next. Keep in mind that some groups will start the rotation in the middle.
 - Prepare a time management plan for the learning station exercises, including initial directions, orientation or modeling, time in stations, rotation of stations, sound used to indicate time to change station (e.g., bell, timer, clap), and clean-up.
2. Set up the classroom.
 - Label each station clearly with its title, the stated goal, and clear directions for the station activity.
 - Make sure each station contains all the materials and directions needed for the students to understand the topic or concept.
3. Explain the purpose and process of the learning station exercise to the students.
 - Describe the purpose and contents of each learning station.



- Review the directions for each learning station, including a detailed description of the task to be completed, norms for behavior, roles for the station if needed, and time allotted for each station.
4. Establish the assessment method.
- Provide a checklist or goal sheet of exercises for each learning station.
 - Implement the final assessment: class presentation, poster session, self-evaluation, peer evaluation, discussion, and so on.

Conclusion

Using learning stations promotes student engagement with multiple topics or concepts and provides the students with varied hands-on or in-depth experiences to increase interest, understanding, and retention.

