Summarizing Strategies

Key Points

* Summarizing is a learning strategy, not a teaching strategy. It is child-centered. The teachers’ role is to facilitate, gather evidence of learning and redirect instruction. In other words, you can see if they know it, and if they don’t, fix it.
* When summarizing, students create a “schema” for the information and remember it better and longer.
* Summarizing should be distributed throughout a lesson, not just at the end.
* Summarizing is proven to raise student achievement by 34 percentile points.
* Be creative. Take these ideas and expand them to make your own. Remember summarizing can be verbal, written or physical. Cover all learning styles.

KWL – Before the lesson, chart what students know and what the want to know or questions they have. Distribute adding to the learned and want to learn columns throughout the lesson. Don’t just wait until the end. Students can use the learned column to write an expository paragraph or report.

Ticket Out the Door – Before a transition, ask students to write down or verbally tell a key point of the lesson or something they felt was important they learned. One possible way is to give each a sticky note and have them post the note on a chart or special place as they leave the room or move about before the next lesson.

3~2~1 – This is a basic structure for summarizing. Students must give 3 ideas, then 2 ideas, and then 1 idea. An example might be:

Write: 3 different types of rock

 2 ways people mine for minerals

 1 question you have about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Key Word – Student must think of one word that was most important, or key to a lesson. They must be able to explain the significance of the word chosen. Alpha boxes are a great version of Key Word. The Two-Word Strategy is the same also.

Learning Logs – Students simple keep a journal of what they have learned. This is a great way for students to record the essential question before the lesson and then answer the question after. They can also summarize throughout the lesson by writing short comments or reactions during a lesson.

Some learning log prompts are:

Today I learned……

I would like to learn more about……

What would you do differently next time?

What part did you struggle with?

My work shows……….

I’ve been thinking about…….

What changes did you make?

Three things I wonder about……

The best parts of my work today were…….

Something new I learned today is……..

It was hard for me to learn about…….

How did your thinking change?

I would like to find the answer to……

Draw a Picture – Instead of telling, writing or acting have students draw a picture that summarizes. Fold a sheet of paper into a given number of squares. During a lesson stop that many times and have students draw a short sketch in each box to help themselves remember. After, students can use the sketches to retell or summarize the whole lesson.

Create an Organizer – It is best to set up a graphic organizer BEFORE the lesson. As the lesson progresses have students add to the organizer. Then complete it at the conclusion. Students can also create their own organizer for information.

Reflection Questions – These are questions used to facilitate summarizing. Some examples are:

What were you expected to do?

In this assignment, what did you do well?

If you were to do this task over, what would you do differently?

What help do you need from the teacher?

How could the teacher make this lesson better for your learning?

Inner/Outer Circles – Create two circles, one circle inside the other. The inner circle should face out while the outer circle faces the inner. Student summarize with the person they face. The outer circle then rotates creating a new summarizing partner.

Plus/Minus/Intriguing – Set up a chart with three columns. Head each column with plus, minus and intriguing. Throughout the lesson students add to the chart. This could also be used as a survey before a lesson to assess prior knowledge or attitudes.

The Important Thing – Give students a paragraph frame to complete. Paragraph frames can also be given to answer essential questions. An example would be:

The important thing about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Detail sentence\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Detail sentence\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Detail sentence\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

But, the most important thing about\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_is\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Adapted from Learning-Focused Strategies Notebook by Max and Julia Thompson