3.12: Jigsaw

Student Objective
Students will share in the learning by deconstructing information into smaller parts and working together in order to learn about the whole.

Overview
This structure is used to provide students with the opportunity to learn from one another. A given topic is divided into aspects/areas, and each student becomes an expert on one. They then present their learning to the other students so that, ultimately, all students achieve complete coverage of the topic. Allowing students to target one aspect of the larger topic will prevent them from feeling initially overwhelmed which, in turn, helps students to focus, continue forward progress, contribute to the group, and be held accountable for learning.

Materials/Set-Up
- A topic or task, substantial enough to be broken down into smaller chunks for students to analyze (e.g., a reading, a project-based learning assignment, etc.)
- In advance of the activity, complete the following:
  - Determine where students will break into their expert groups to work.
Instructional Steps

1. Divide students into small groups (home groups). The number and size of the home groups is determined by the number of sections of the text to be read or the number of concepts to be introduced/reviewed.

2. Assign each home group member a number that corresponds to the section of the text to be read or to the concept to be mastered. Each member of a given home group is responsible for reading one part of the whole text or for mastering one of the assigned concepts. Each home group should have a member assigned to “1,” another member assigned to “2,” and so on.

3. To start, ask students to leave their home groups and form expert groups with other students who have been assigned the same number.

4. Ask each expert group to read/review its assigned part of the larger topic. Expert group members assist each other with questions, clarifications, and summaries as they read/review information. Encourage students to take notes during this process. Ultimately, expert group members will return to their home groups as specialized experts. To prepare for that, each student should have an opportunity to rehearse and teach the lesson to their other expert group members.

5. Signal students to return to their home groups to teach other members about their specialization (i.e., to share what they learned in their expert groups).

6. Instruct home groups to synthesize the lessons from each expert group into a comprehensive understanding of the whole text or topic by summarizing the main ideas of each section/concept and identifying how all of the parts are related. (The synthesis of compartmentalized information into a bigger picture is analogous to assembling a jigsaw puzzle, hence the activity name.)

7. Students reassemble as a whole class and share their responses and thoughts.

8. Debrief after the Jigsaw to address both process and content.

Extension

- To increase scaffolding:
  - Have two “experts” at each home group so that students can work together to gather and teach their expert information.
  - Use the Jigsaw collaborative structure with various texts, current events, social issues, etc.
- To integrate technology, have students apply their expert group learning to create a digital product. Depending on the content, this could be a drawing, a text box, a digital image with a caption, etc. Upon returning to their home groups, students will combine their expert learning pieces together using PicCollage, Microsoft Publisher, or other software platforms.