KAPOR CENTER

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES GUIDE
SELF-EXPLANATION

GRADES + SUBJECTS All

DESCRIPTION

Self-explanation is a constructive learning strategy that requires students to explain concepts, knowledge, and skills to themselves as they are learning. During the process of self-explanation, students make connections between what they are learning and their prior knowledge. They make inferences and elaborate on content they know and do not know to construct new knowledge and understanding. Self-explanation can also help students monitor and correct misconceptions. Teachers may prompt students to engage in self-explanation, or students may naturally practice this strategy as they are learning. Teachers should model, train, and coach students on how to self-explain. Self-explanations can be written or verbal, open-ended, or focused on specific aspects of the content.

WHEN TO USE IT

As a learning strategy, use self-explanation when you want students to:
- demonstrate understanding of content or tasks as they are learning or engaging in a process.
- monitor their learning by pausing during the activity to explain their understanding and recognize misconceptions.
- explain why a solution or response is correct or incorrect.
- explain the rationale for a concept or solution to their classmates while they are working collaboratively.
- respond to prompts to explain concepts or tasks at strategic points during an activity.

PROS

- Allows students to make sense of their learning in their own way.
- Helps students to identify what they do not understand.

CONS

- Can be less effective if students do not have any prior knowledge to make connections with new material.
- Requires more time for students to learn and complete tasks because they are self-explaining during the learning process.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE APPLICATION

Self-explanation aligns with culturally responsive teaching because it allows students to make sense of their learning based on their own experiences, thoughts, and words. Self-explanation has the potential to nurture students' natural way of learning because they are engaged in deeper learning, and making meaningful connections as they leverage what they already know. It builds their capacity as an independent learner, which is one of the goals of culturally responsive teaching.

ESTIMATED DURATION IN CLASS
< 10 minutes

SKILLS
Reading, Comprehension, Vocabulary, Problem solving, Critical thinking, Inquiry, Computational thinking, Synthesis

BLOOM'S LEVEL(S)

Understanding