



STUMP THE PROFESSOR



The Positive Engagement Project
THE POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT PROJECT
Making a difference...not a dollar.



Stump the Professor is a fun way to get students to approach new/reviewed information in a totally different way that is fun and challenging. It reverses the roles of the teacher and the students in that it provides the students with the opportunity to play with their learning and propose questions about an area being studied and it is the teacher's job to correctly answer the questions put forth by the students. The goal for the students is to ask valid questions at different levels on Bloom's Taxonomy (higher level questions are worth more to the students) and "stump" the teacher, meaning the teacher does not know the answer.

How to Play:

Step 1: Choose the Curriculum

Select a portion of a book or handout for students to study and pull questions from. If it is a selection from a textbook, it should be something that has been previously read and discussed. This allows all students to feel as though they can participate fully. The selection should not be more than 3-4 pages at the most. It should be focused on a particular area of study.

Step 2: Allow Study/Question Forming Time

Allow students (and teacher) @ 10-15 minutes to study the selected text. It is important that students write down their questions properly. They should work with partners during this time so they can "test" their questions on each other. The teacher needs to be sure to take this time to study as well because during the actual challenge portion of the activity the teacher is not allowed to use the book or anything else at all to aide themselves. The teacher must rely on what they know from the text and nothing else.

Step 3: Stump the Professor

Students raise their hands and take turns asking the teacher questions derived from the selected reading. Students can keep their books out and continue to use them throughout the activity but the teacher cannot use the book or any other support tools. The goal is to ask the teacher a question the teacher does not know the answer to. When a student asks a question, they are rewarded with a classroom ticket (or some form of classroom monetary reward) of a very small amount just for asking. If the teacher gets the answer correct, the student gets their reward just for asking and the teacher moves on to the next student for the next question. If the student asks a question the teacher does not know the answer to, the students gets their initial small reward for participating as well as a larger reward for successfully stumping the professor.

Here is a real sample from a fifth grade classroom:

General Rules:

- * 15 minutes to study and develop questions
- * Two tickets just for asking a valid question
- * Additional ten tickets if the student stumps the teacher with a "right there" question from the book.
- * Additional 20 tickets if a student asks a question that is a higher level question which is not "right there" in the text but requires problem solving or inference.
- * If a question is invalid (unclear, confusing, multiple possible answers) no tickets are given and the student can ask the question in a different way or choose to have the teacher move on and come back to them. *It is recommended to tell the student how many other questions will be taken before going back to them so they have a sense of time and urgency to get it done.*

The teacher chose 4 pages from the science textbook covering an area the class had studied earlier in the year. The students were given @15 minutes to review the material and write down questions to ask the teacher. The teacher spent this time studying as well. At the conclusion of the 15 minutes, the teacher sat in a chair at the front of the room and asked for a volunteer to ask a question.

He selected a student and the student received two tickets for volunteering to ask a question (tickets were not passed out until that student's turn was completed). The teacher gave the correct answer and the student got up to get their two tickets while the others raised their hands to be selected. The teacher chose another student and that student asked a higher level question that the teacher got correct and that student also received two tickets in all.

A third student was chosen and gave a "right there" question and the teacher gave an incorrect answer. At this point the teacher has the right to ask the student to prove that the teacher was wrong with their answer and the student has to show the teacher where they got the information for their question and what the correct response should have been. This is important because students will sometimes claim an answer is incorrect when they actually misunderstood the answer or had the wrong answer themselves to start with. In this case, the student was correct and received a total of 12 tickets.

The game went on like this for @ 20 minutes and the teacher missed a total of 3 questions. *DO NOT "TAKE IT EASY" ON THE STUDENTS SO THEY WILL FEEL SUCCESSFUL JUST FOR PLAYING ALONG. MAKE THEM EARN IT. WHEN THEY WORK HARD FOR SOMETHING, THEY WILL ENJOY THE REWARD MUCH MORE. "TAKING IT EASY" MERELY CHEAPENS THE GAME AND IT WILL LOSE ITS IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING.*

Frequently Asked Question:

What if a student asks a question which has already been asked?

This is not a problem at all. Simply, answer the question and then mention that it was the same question which was already asked. Even though the question was the same, it may have been phrased in such a way that it clarified the content for that student and probably other students as well.

What if a student asks a question which is invalid due to multiple answers or a general lack of clarity?

This will happen and when it does explain to the student why the question is invalid and then tell them exactly when you will come back to them for a clarified version of their question. For example, tell them, "I will come back to you after three more questions have been asked." After each question, remind the student how many more questions are left before it is their turn once again. This puts a definite time limit on them to restate their question yet keeps them accountable for proper formation of a question.

What if participation is low?

This could definitely be a problem and if the class is not buying into the game then it will not be beneficial to the whole group. This is really more of a problem with motivation and the teacher needs to "sell" to the students. There are many ways to do this. One way is to remind them that this is much more fun than some of the traditional alternative forms studying and learning. Also, this can be done in a small group setting as well, thus keeping the focus on fewer students and making it virtually impossible to "hide" and not participate. One teacher even used many of the questions the students created as the chapter assessment, thus making the game very relevant to what was going to be assessed. When done properly, a teacher will seldom have the problem of lack of participation.

How often should I use this game?

It is recommended not to use this game more than once a week. The reason is two-fold. First, you want to keep this as a "reward" activity for students for doing well (using this as motivation for other work is very successful). If you give out the fun activity too often, students may lose interest in the activity or not put forth sufficient effort during other activities knowing that this is coming up soon. Second, it is a higher level activity that may be difficult for some of the lower students and teachers need to be careful about alienating students by pushing them beyond their abilities too often. It is good to push students ahead, but that needs to be balanced so as to avoid a sense of being lost and not able to contribute from struggling students. Remember, it is important that the students are having fun each time they do it as this will make this activity an effective learning tool.

What are other options for rewards?

If a teacher does not use a ticket/monetary system that is perfectly fine. There are many ways to keep kids actively engaged while giving them a sense of purpose and a goal to work towards. These rewards could be early dismissal to recess or lunch, in class educational "game" time, they get to choose a math activity for the math block from choices provided by the teacher (you can do this for other subject areas as well), etc. And rather than giving an individual reward per question, a teacher can choose to use a class point system instead and the entire class is trying to reach a goal number of points earned. One point is earned each time the teacher is "stumped." The teacher can predetermine how many points the class is working to achieve and what the reward is for achieving the goal.

The benefit of the point system is that the teacher can set a low number of points to scores (i.e.: 5 points) when first playing the game so the students can feel sense of accomplishment after just one or two games. At this point, the teacher can slowly increase the number of points needed to reach the goal. An example of a range of points throughout a year could be starting at five and moving up to 21 points by the end

of the year. Of course, it is perfectly fine to use both reward systems: the immediate reward of classroom money as well as the class point goal for a whole class reward.

What about lower students who struggle with pulling questions from the assigned content material?

There are students who may struggle with reading, comprehending, and formulating questions from a chapter or reading selection. The first step to help avoid this problem is taken immediately in the fact that this game is played with content that has previously been taught and practiced. This will take care of this problem most of the time. However, if a teacher finds this problem still to be evident in a few students, simply redirect those students to focus on only a portion of the assigned reading/concept to be used during the game. For example, if a segment of 6 pages is the focus for the class, have the struggling students only focus on one page or even one paragraph. This will help avoid the feeling of being overwhelmed, thus potentially resulting in the student shutting down and not fully benefitting from the activity.

In the same manner, if the teacher has chosen to review a concept (such as everything learned about fractions so far in class), the teacher can narrow it down by telling struggling students to focus on just adding and subtracting fractions, or maybe just questions referring to simplifying. Each teacher will know how best to adapt the activity to the differing levels of acquisition by their students.

Are there other uses for the questions they have created?

A final extension piece that could be added onto this is to allow the students to create, either with a partner or in small groups, their own test. The teacher would give the students a particular standard they must focus on as well as a few samples of grade level questions addressing the same standard they are assigned. Released Test Questions are a great resource for examples as they are at grade level and the questions are already identified by standard. The students would be given two "test writing" templates, one for writing out their questions and the other would be used as an answer key. The students would have to "test" their questions against the sample questions to be sure they line up in rigor before turning in both templates: questions and answer key. A sample template is provided here for use but teachers should feel free to alter or redesign a template to address their particular needs. The example given here are just that, an example and nothing more. The questions generated by the students can be multiple choice or free response or a combination of the two. This decision is left to the discretion of the teacher.

This is a basic summary of how to play the game. It is a great opportunity for students to spiral review previous material while addressing higher levels of thinking and cognition by putting them into the role question generators. Students need to recognize how questions are formulated in order to better understand how to approach question they are confronted with. Within this one activity, students are addressing these higher levels of thinking while seeing the material from a new perspective. Have fun and good luck trying to avoid being stumped.

Stump the Professor Testing Template

Subject: _____

Strand: _____

Standard: _____

1.

3.

2.

4.

EXAMPLE

Stump the Professor Testing Template

Subject: Language Arts

Strand: Figurative Language

Standard: SRW1.5

Understand and explain the figurative and metaphorical use of words in context.

1. The daisies were gently dancing in the soft breeze.

What type of figurative language is being used in the sentence above?

3. His body paid the price for being involved in sports his whole life.

What does the author mean when saying "paid the price"?

2. What does the author mean when she says, "A flood of people came through the front door."?

4. What type of figurative language is being used in the following sentence?

He had a mountain of paperwork on his desk.

EXAMPLE

Jump the Professor Testing Template

Subject: Math

Strand: Fractions +/-

Standard: NS 2.3

Solve simple problems involving adding/subtracting fractions and mixed numbers (simplest form)

1. $5\frac{4}{5} - 2\frac{1}{3}$

a. $3\frac{3}{2}$

b. $3\frac{7}{15}$

c. $7\frac{5}{15}$

d. $2\frac{2}{3}$

3. If Jorge walked $\frac{3}{8}$ of a mile to his friends and they then walk $\frac{1}{4}$ mile to the park, how far did Jorge walk in all?

2. What is $\frac{2}{3} + \frac{3}{4}$ in simplest form?

a. $\frac{5}{7}$

b. $\frac{5}{12}$

c. $1\frac{3}{4}$

d. $1\frac{5}{12}$

4. If a store is $\frac{2}{3}$ of a mile away from Lisa's house and she drives $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile toward the store and then stops, how much further must she drive to get to the store?

EXAMPLE

Stump the Professor Testing Template

Subject: Review

Strand: _____

Standard: _____

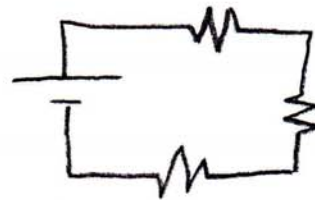
1. Why was Sacagawea seen as a symbol of peace?

3. $34.6 \times .32$

2. With her eyes closed she nervously stepped out of the plane and felt herself falling.

Write the prepositional phrase from the sentence above.

4. Identify



- a. series circuit
- b. parallel circuit
- c. not a circuit
- d. incomplete circuit