

GET IN THE ZONE

How to apply Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development in the classroom



1

Find a Problem to Solve

Lev Vygotsky began a movement which today encourages a learner to solve problems with a group more complex than they could have solved alone. In order to accomplish this a problem is needed to solve that is just beyond the learner's individual ability.



2

Gather a group of learners

Lev Vygotsky and several other researchers suggest that learners come with different abilities, experiences, and desires to learn. Learners are at a different place within their zone of proximal development. When these learners are given a chance to collectively solve a problem just beyond their own ability, their minds are pushed by other learners.



3

Determine the starting point

The zone of proximal development indicates that learners can complete certain tasks independently, while there is a certain point when the learner cannot complete a task without guidance. In order to apply this theory in the classroom, a learner's zone should be determined. This can be done through a pre-assessment. Gauge learner's readiness.



4

Strategically group learners

ZPD implies that well formed groups of learners, from different positions within their ZPD, encourage advancement. A guide is needed to push learners further. The guide can be anyone with the ability to scaffold learning.



5

Try it alone first.

The goal is to move the learner further to the outside of their zone. First, see how far the learner can go on their own. Offer tasks that learners can do with little assistance.



6

Try it with a group.

ZPD learning suggests that learners' capabilities progress in a social setting. Present a task that is just beyond the abilities of the group. Ask focused questions that encourage collaboration to solve the problem. Give positive feedback. Guide the learners, offering tools needed to solve the problem.



7

Use dynamic assessments

Vygotsky was a proponent of gauging students' intelligence through different means other than the traditional assessments. Research has progressed since Vygotsky's theories. Teachers are now encouraged to utilize dynamic assessments and enhanced assessments to gauge learning.

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By: Mia MacMeekin

<https://anethicalisland.wordpress.com>

