

A Practitioners Forum Brainstorming Humor's Potential Research Applications in Education

Special Education Humor, Research, Teachers

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Abstract

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This Forum will explore an array of humor's functions in the classroom with research possibilities in mind. The following is a partial list of humor's functions:

Humor: triggers memory, stimulates creativity, motivates, reduces stress, improves communication, directs attention, opens "closed" minds, improves self esteem, assists in the retention of subject matters and energizes both teachers and students.

Unique strategies of studying humor's effects will be included in this session. An emphasis will be placed on how to measure humor's often-elusive outcomes as well as how to assess humor's effects in teacher education programs.

Finally, Forum participants will exchange ideas in the form of "humor research action plans" ostensibly resulting in research and presentations at future conferences.

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Korobkin (1998) stated, "Humor in the classroom is a twentieth century phenomenon. Previously, it was considered unscholarly to use humor as a teaching strategy or even to show a sense of humor as a personality trait. To entertain was not to educate. Thus, humor was viewed as an unnecessary and undignified embellishment of the serious, classic education experience" (p. 88).

Today a sense of humor appears to be essential for teachers as we continue to adapt our role when working with other classroom teachers, parents, administrators, and community members. A sense of humor is especially critical for special and general education teachers as we try to cope with life in our challenging classrooms. Sometimes we all experience days where our sense of humor is the only thing that "keeps us going" or "gets us through" the day. That sense of humor and the ability to laugh about various situations, as well as ourselves, can often put our personal and professional life in perspective.

By intentionally integrating appropriate humor in the classroom and the curriculum, a number of benefits for both teachers and students may be achieved. Researchers and educators are now beginning to seriously study the effects of infusing humor into a sound instructional design. This Forum will present and exchange research-supported, classroom tested methods, strategies, techniques, and activities designed to:

- make teaching more fun for both students and teachers
- develop self-esteem in students
- motivate students

- reduce stress
- teach academic content
- stimulate creativity
- maintain attention
- assess comprehension
- enhance thinking
- energize both teachers and students

This Forum will also address a number of caveats when using or researching humor in the classroom. Time will be set aside for audience's personal anecdotes on how humor has been important in their academic lives. Following these self-reports, participants will be challenged to have fun as they actively engage in a group brainstorm session developing applied humor research projects. Finally, Forum participants will exchange ideas in the form of "humor research action plan" ostensibly resulting in presentations at future conventions.

Reference

Korobkin, L.R. (1998). Effects of immediacy on recall of information. Communication Education, 37.