



Systematic spiraling

A STRATEGIC METHOD OF REVISITING PAST CONTENT TO GREATLY IMPROVE STUDENTS' LONG-TERM MEMORY


First, determine what academic content is "Need To Know" vs. what information is "Nice To Know." It's essential that students remember "Need To Know" content long-term.

Second, once this "Need To Know" information is identified, spend 3-5 minutes daily to systematically spiral (review) the essential content with the steps below.

During the initial review days, ask lower level questions to solidify a general understanding and create a solid foundation. Question examples are identified below.


As weeks pass, increase the levels of questions by asking students to connect spiraled (reviewed) information with current content. Possible questions are noted below.

Notice how students' understanding becomes deeper as they continually connect past information to what's currently being explored, as well as their ability to make personal connections.




Possible
**Lower Level
Questions**

What is...
Who is...
How many...
What's the main idea...
Repeat...
List...
Label...



Possible
**Higher Level
Questions**

Explain in your own words...
Compare...
How does this connect to...
What if...
Relate...
Critique...



You may be thinking, "This sounds great in theory, but my instructional time is limited. Doesn't this give me less time to teach all the material I need to cover?"

First, covering material and teaching material are two different things. And while the 3-5 minutes of systematic review can seem like it takes away from new instructional time, it's important to recognize the long term benefits:

- 1) students have a stronger understanding of the essential content
- 2) there is less reteaching due to this greater comprehension
- 3) students understand how past info connects to current content

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