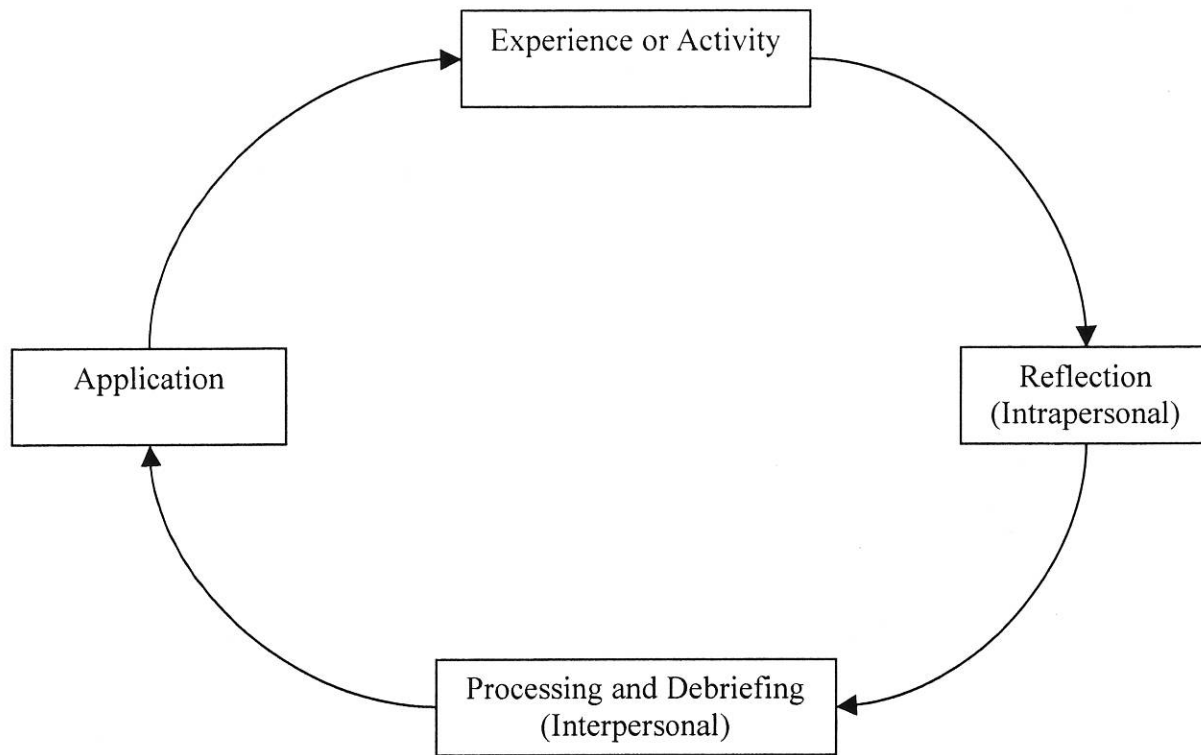


The Experiential Learning Cycle



Engaging students in interesting activities and experiences is only part of the learning cycle. While it may be the most obvious and clearly the most fun, it is only the first step. Allowing students the time to think about what they have done (Reflection), and reserving the time to talk about the experience (Processing) are both necessary. Reflection and Processing help students arrive at the point where they are able to apply what they have learned to future experiences. It is a rare adolescent who can pull the deepest level of learning from an activity without first processing the experience.

All experiential learning is student centered. The facilitator cannot tell the participants what was learned or how they felt during the activity. This information can only come from the participants. The facilitator can, however, through the use of directed processing questions, focus the participants' responses on a specific topic. Use of this strategy is how one can employ the experiential model in the traditional classroom. The same activity that illustrates teamwork and collaboration, for example, can be used to teach peer review in the language arts classroom. In addition, processing exercises give students the opportunity to practice sharing ideas one-on-one as well as in small and large groups. These skills are directly transferable to class discussion, presentations and the development of ideas.

Activity: Connectiles

HOWL: I can work cooperatively with others. I communicate politely and kindly.

Learning Targets:

1. I can listen and support the ideas of others.
2. I can demonstrate how to work cooperatively in a small group to complete a common task.
3. I can ask questions that will help me complete a task.
4. I can think creatively to solve a problem.

Time: 25-40 minutes

Materials: Connectiles cards and a flat surface for each of the 2-4 groups.

Procedure:

1. Students should be divided equally into 2-4 groups, there should be 4-6 students in a group.
2. Each group should have a designated flat space in the room.
3. Place all the tiles, of the same color, on the floor in front of the group.
4. "You will notice that the tiles go together to form a grid. Your task is to identify matching edges and put them together. Edges 'match' when you can find a connection that links two puzzle pieces together. While you may not figure out the relationships between every single pair of edges, you will figure out enough to put the grid together. **Once the grid is together, you will be rewarded with a message.**"

5. Assemble to pieces into a puzzle until all the pieces are used and a message is completed.

Processing:

1. How did your group demonstrate cooperation?
2. Did your group run into difficulty because of the language used on the cards?
3. What roles did the members in your group demonstrate? Was anyone left out and why? How did that feel for that person? The group?
4. What kinds of questions did the group ask each other? The teachers? How did asking questions contribute to your success?
5. Would this activity have been more successful/simpler if it was an individual task? What was helpful about doing it in a group?
6. How is completing this task together similar or different than working together on an expedition?