

How Does Talking Improve Student Learning?

OXYGEN FEEDS THE BRAIN! When students are talking, more oxygen gets sent to the brain. If we don't have our students actively engaged or talking about their learning, the brain becomes deprived of oxygen and it goes to sleep. A yawn is the brain's way of giving itself oxygen. Talking also stimulates the frontal lobe of the brain where most of the learning takes place. If your students are yawning, get them talking!

Incorporating constructive student talking into our classrooms can keep students' brains engaged and awake. The following strategies encourage on-task, student engagement while feeding the brain with oxygen:

1. **Think-Pair-Share**: This strategy, conceived by Frank Lyman and Arlene Mindus in 1977, focuses on providing students with "think time", having students interact as a pair to discuss the learning, then having students share their thinking with a larger group. **When one student answers the teacher's question, the brains of other students shut down. Using this strategy, we can keep all brains engaged!** Some examples are provided below:

Ways to Think!

- **Point of View**: Students imagine themselves as a specific person or object within a given situation. "Imagine you are a slave. How do you feel?"
- **Similarities**: Students find similarities between items, events, or ideas. "What do the veins of this leaf remind you of?"
- **Analogies**: Have students find resemblances between two objects or concepts that are otherwise unlike. This can encourage students to relate a learning concept to prior knowledge. "Cultures are to the world as colours are to the rainbow". Students will need practice of basic

analogies before developing their own. For an interactive game to help students practise working with analogies, visit the following website:

<http://www.quia.com/cb/7146.html>

- Simile/Metaphors: Having students write similes or metaphors can help students relate concepts they are learning to more concrete concepts or objects.
- Evaluate: Students weigh and decide among alternatives, and defend their conclusions. "Was is right what the character did at the end of the novel? Why or why not?"

Ways to Pair!

- Devil's Advocate: Students share opinions about a specific topic and their partner takes this opposite position. "Look at it this way..."
 - Tell/Repeat: One partner tells the other about specific information, then the second partner repeats it back to the first.
 - Rally Robin: Partners take turns speaking about a specific topic and go back and forth.
 - Free Share: Partners get together and discuss a specific question directed by the teacher.
 - Home & Expert Groups: Students are divided into "Home" and "Expert" groups. Students learn or discuss a specific topic in their "Expert" group and then share that information to their "Home" Group.
- ✓ For more examples of Think-Pair-Share, see "Think-Pair-Share Smart Card" handed out at our session. If you were not able to attend our session, go to <http://www.kaganonline.com>

2. **Wraparounds**: Participants form a circle. Each individual takes a turn telling the following information or design own topics for students to discuss:
 - Something he/she will use from the learning
 - Something he/she will remember
 - An AHA! from the lesson

3. **Talking Topics**: Students form partners. Partner A tells a fact to partner B. Partner B gives another fact back. Partners keep swapping facts about a topic until they run out of facts.

4. **Conversation Circles**: Form a circle with a group of three students. Each group member takes a letter: A, B or C. "A" starts talking until the teacher gives a signal. "B" continues with the topic. The teacher gives the signal again and "C" takes over and picks up the topic. This continues until there are no more facts or ideas to add to the topic.

5. **Rotation Reflection**: Post chart paper around the room with a related topic written on each sheet. Small groups gather at each location to give ideas and view on the chart topic. A recorder fills in the charts with the great ideas. When the teacher gives a signal, the group moves to the next chart and responds to that topic. Groups continue around the room, visiting and adding to each chart. The last group remains at the chart, consolidates the information, and reports to the large group.

6. **Grand Finale Comment**: As students are leaving the class, each student makes the "Grand Finale Comment". These comments can give the teacher feedback about the learning that occurred. Some examples are as follows:
 - Today I learned... Tomorrow I need...
 - Today I felt... because...
 - I would colour today _____ (Red) because...

- I hope we... next.
- One word to describe today is...
- I felt like _____(an animal) during _____ because...
- Our group was great today when we...
- Tomorrow our group needs to work on...
- A theme song for our work today would be...