

Discussion and Share-Out Strategies

Guide

TURN AND TALK / SHOULDER PARTNER

Purpose: This strategy meets the needs of a wide range of students. For students who have difficulty sharing ideas in a large group, they have a chance to rehearse with a partner. For students who always want to share, they are guaranteed the chance to be heard by at least one partner. You can also use this strategy for spontaneous formative assessment by listening briefly to each pair as they are discussing. This will give you a quick snapshot of how your class is thinking about the prompt or question.

How to do it: Pose a question or prompt to the students. Give the students a few moments to share their responses with the student sitting closest to them.

TALKING STICK

Purpose: Drawn from the practices of indigenous Americans, the purpose of this protocol is to ensure that everyone has a chance to speak. It can also be helpful if you have students who constantly have their hands up; by ensuring all students will have their chance to speak, students can put down their hands and be active listeners.

How to do it: Designate a special object or pen as “the talking stick.” Discussion participants pass the stick around the circle, with only the person holding the stick being able to speak. Allow each participant to speak for one minute without interruptions and then pass the “talking stick” to the next participant. After everyone has spoken, allow a few minutes for students to discuss as a group.

NAME STICKS

Purpose: This inclusive share-out strategy encourages quiet or shy students to speak.

How to do it: Write the name of each student in the class on a popsicle stick and store in a cup or bag. During the discussion activity, pull random popsicle sticks out to call on students to speak.

1-2-3 DISCUSSION

Purpose: This inclusive share-out strategy encourages quiet or shy students to speak and gets students moving around the classroom.

How to do it: Students start by standing somewhere in the classroom by themselves. After hearing the focus question or prompt, they think silently for 30 seconds. Then, they make a group of 2 and have 2 minutes to share their ideas in that partnership, responding to the prompt or question. Then, students must make groups of 3 and have 3 minutes to share their ideas in response to the prompt or question. While students discuss, circulate and listen to their conversations to gauge understanding and note ideas to bring up with the whole class.

MINGLE PAIR SHARE / DANCE AND DISCUSS

Purpose: This is a great way to get students moving around the classroom. Additionally, this strategy encourages students to talk to different classmates than those they may normally work with.

How to use it: After being given a prompt or question, students walk around the room for a set amount of time on a timer (ex. 10 seconds). When time is up, they find a partner *near them* and give that partner a high five, and the partners take turns sharing their responses. After a short, timed discussion period, the partners break apart in search of a new classmate to high five. Each time, students should try to find a new partner.

For the Dance and Discuss version of this strategy, a clip of music is played instead of a timer. This is very similar to musical chairs. When the music ends, students pair up just like the Mingle Pair Share. After a short, timed discussion period, the music begins again and the procedure repeats. Each time, students should try to find a new partner.

POPCORN SHARE-OUT

Purpose: This strategy challenges students to share ideas without talking over each other, which is great practice for real life discussion skills.

How to use it: Students voluntarily share their ideas without raising their hands. Tell students this is not a race to get their ideas out, but an opportunity to practice organic discussions in a large group. To make this successful:

- Students follow "3 before me," allowing 3 other students to speak before they share again.
- Guide students to assess the body language of classmates to see if others are about to share.
- Before you start, give guidance about what students can do if two students begin speaking at the same time; they can decide who will continue and who will go second. The rest of the class will wait until these students have a chance to share.

STUDENT-LED DISCUSSION

Purpose: This strategy puts students in charge of the discussion and ensures diversity of voices. This works well for younger children.

How to use it: One student begins the conversation (teacher can choose who begins). When that student is done, they call on another student. The pattern can be established by the teacher (ex. "Call on a student on the opposite side of the room," or "Let's alternate between people wearing shorts or pants," etc.). Each student calls on another student until everyone has spoken. Students who want to share next may hold up their hands. Consider adding the challenge that students cannot call on a student who has already spoken until everyone has had a chance to speak.

3 BEFORE ME

Purpose: This is a discussion rule that students may follow to ensure that no one dominates the conversation.

How to use it: During an open-format discussion or group work of any kind, students may follow this rule by not speaking again until 3 other students have shared their ideas.

WHIP AROUND / ONCE AROUND THE ROOM

Purpose: This is a very quick way to hear every student's thoughts on a topic when responses are likely to be short (2 sentences or fewer).

How to use it: After posing a question or a prompt, quickly call on a student to share their thinking, then call on the student sitting to the right or left of that student. Continue calling on students in that same direction until each student has shared. As much as possible, call on students in a predictable pattern (moving in a circle, or calling on all students at a table group before moving to the next table group) so students are not surprised by their turn to speak and you will not miss calling on a student.

PARKING LOT

Purpose: This strategy serves two purposes: first, it allows students to pose a question even when it's not an appropriate moment to share that question with the class (perhaps because the question is off topic, or the discussion is ending). Second, it provides an opportunity to ask questions to students who may be reluctant to speak in front of everyone. Questions posted to the Parking Lot are visible and easy for everyone to read, so you can strategically choose which question you'd like to address at a given moment.

How to use it: Designate a portion of the board or an anchor chart as the Parking Lot. When a student has a question, but it's not an appropriate moment to ask, the student may "park" their idea in this space by writing on this space or adding a sticky-note and posting it within the space. Take advantage of small unused moments of class time (perhaps after a class transition, or in the last moments of a class session) to address a question from the Parking Lot. It is important that these questions are addressed at some point, rather than parked and forgotten.

QUESTION JAR

Purpose: Much like the Parking Lot, the Question Jar serves two purposes: first, it allows students to pose a question even when it's not an appropriate moment (perhaps because the question is off topic, or the discussion is ending). Second, it gives you the opportunity to ask questions to students who may be reluctant to speak in a large group. Question slips can be pulled from the jar at random, which can build excitement.

How to use it: When a student has a question, but it's not an appropriate moment to ask, the student may write their question on a slip of paper and drop it into the Question Jar (or other designated receptacle). Take advantage of small unused moments of class time (perhaps after a class transition) to address a question from the Question Jar. It is important that these questions are addressed at some point, rather than placed in the jar and forgotten.

TALKING TOKENS

Purpose: This share-out strategy can help limit students who constantly have their hands up by challenging them to prioritize their questions or comments during a whole class discussion.

How to do it: Have on hand a jar or basket of "tokens" such as poker chips, playing cards, or colorful erasers. During a whole class discussion, give everyone a set number of tokens (ex. 2-3). Each time a student is called upon to speak, they sacrifice a token. When they are out of tokens, they must only listen to the discussion and may not share any more.

THINK PAIR SHARE

Purpose: This strategy meets the needs of a wide range of students. For students who have difficulty sharing ideas in a large group, they have a chance to rehearse with a partner. For students who always want to share, they are guaranteed the chance to be heard by at least one partner, if not the whole class. You can also use it for spontaneous formative assessment by listening briefly to each pair as they are discussing. This will give you a quick snapshot of how your class is thinking about the prompt or question.

How to use it: Present students with a question or discussion prompt. Give the students a few moments to silently think about the question or prompt. Then have students pair up with someone sitting close to them. Each member of the pair shares their thinking in response to the question or prompt. If they have time, they can have a brief discussion. Call the group's attention back for a group discussion. Ask the pairs to share what they discussed.

THINK PAIR SQUARE

Purpose: Similar to a Think Pair Share, this strategy meets the needs of a wide range of students. For students who have difficulty sharing ideas in a large group, they have a chance to rehearse their ideas twice. For students who always want to share, they are guaranteed the chance to be heard by a small group of peers, if not the whole class.

How to do it: Students start by sharing their ideas with a Shoulder Partner in response to the focus question or prompt. Then, each student pair joins another pair to make a group of 4, and they all share their ideas again with the larger group. Groups are then challenged to synthesize or summarize their ideas (if possible) for sharing out with the whole class.