

STRUCTURING ACTIVE LEARNING: "Tools for your engagement tool kit"

"It's not what you say or do that ultimately matters... It **IS** what you get the students to do as a result of what you said and did that counts."

- 1) **Choral responses** - all say it together-wakes students up -gives thinking time - very helpful to provide a cue such as holding your hands up - then drop to signal it's time to respond
 - ✓ cue students to show you they are ready...e.g. "thumbs up when you know..."
 - ✓ non-verbal choral responses too, "touch the word... put your finger under..."
 - ✓ provides a safe way to practice academic language together - e.g. repeating a model sentence

- 2) **Partner responses** - one of the most potent strategies we have to increase active language use, attention, higher order thinking, etc. during instruction.
 - ✓ teacher chooses partners - alternate ranking based on literacy/social skills
 - ✓ assign roles - A and B, one and two ("A's tell B's 2 things we have learned about...")
 - ✓ specific topic - "what do you predict____; two things we've learned about____")
 - ✓ short time periods - 15 seconds, 1 minute, etc.
 - ✓ monitor individual students, provide feedback & scaffolding as necessary

**** Be sure to structure** the academic language (e.g. sentence starters, "I predict that _____.")

- 3) **Written responses** - especially as you move up the grades (3 and above)
 - writing first increases thinking, accountability, focus etc.
 - provides the teacher with concrete feedback (e.g. "Do I need to clarify this?")
 - connects written language to oral language, provides practice w/syntax & grammar

- 4) **Randomly call on students** (or faux randomly!!) - **Whole Group Discussion**
 - ✓ **NO** hand raising questions ("Who can tell me _____?") - If it is worth doing ALL students need to be "doing the doing" of learning - NOT just watching others!
 - increases accountability, attention, focus, involvement and it is more fun/lively & effective!

Explicit Academic Language Teaching

- Provide students with the language tools (vocabulary, grammar & syntax) necessary to competently discuss the topic ("One consequence of the invention was a rise in _____.")
e.g. Sentence Starters: Model for students fluent use of a sentence starter and have them repeat the model sentence chorally BEFORE rehearsing their sentence w/a partner.

Multiple benefits of structured thinking & partner rehearsal BEFORE Whole Class Discussions Include:

1. increases number of students actively "doing the doing" of learning - actively responding
2. all students get feedback/clarification/support from their partners - no practicing of errors
3. more time to think and rehearse - encourages reflection & thoughtfulness
4. students likely to be more confident and willing to share with the group
5. all students provided the scaffolding to confidently utilize target academic language (vocab & syntax)
6. increases the odds students are attentive, engaged in the instructional conversation
7. teacher has written/spoken "evidence checks" of learner engagement
8. provides the teacher w/informal assessment - teacher can listen in or "dip stick" 2 or 3 pairs