

# 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...pencils down & look up"
    - ✓ non-verbal choral responses too, "touch the word... put your finger under...hands up if you agree"
    - ✓ provides a safe way to practice academic language together - e.g. repeating a model sentence
  
  - 2) **Partner, Small Group 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\_\_\_\_")
    - ✓ monitor individual students, provide feedback & scaffolding as necessary
    - ✓ small groups (4 works best) **IF** the topic/task warrants a group - be sure to structure accountability for each student (so EVERYONE is accountable for the learning)
- \*\* Be sure to structure** the academic language (e.g. sentence starters, "I predict that \_\_\_\_\_.")
- 3) **Written responses (brief non-fiction writing)** - especially as you move up the grades (3 and above)
    - brief non-fiction writing increases thinking, accountability, focus etc.
    - provides the teacher with concrete feedback (e.g. "Do they grasp \_\_\_\_\_?")
    - connects written language to oral language, provides practice w/vocabulary, syntax & grammar
  
  - 4) **Randomly (or faux randomly!!) Strategically call on students - Structure 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! No bystanders, no one "on the sidelines"
    - ✓ Ask for volunteers to provide "value added" **AFTER** 2-5 students have been strategically called on
      - \*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 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/small group 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 (HOTS)
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. provides the teacher w/informal assessment - teacher can listen in or "dip stick" 2 or 3 pairs