

Engaging All Students

There are many methods that teachers use to actively engage students in the lesson. Some of the ideas here will work in any classroom, from grade one through twelve.

Non-Verbal Signals

Here are some ways to get the whole class involved in responding to questions, without having students say anything.

- "Raise your hand when you know the answer"
- "Touch your forehead when you have an idea"
- "Close your eyes and think. Open your eyes when you have a response"
- "Put your thumb up if you agree, sideways if you're not sure, and down if you disagree..."
- "I'll know you're ready to respond when you are quietly standing up..."

Slates

Many teachers are using slates ... small hand-held whiteboards at every desk. Students use them to write short answers, illustrate ideas, or hold up responses.

Students sometimes feel less intimidated using them than answering out loud, and are more likely to respond.

Music

Marcia Tate (2010) has written about the value of music in the classroom. *"Whenever students put content to music, they stand a better chance of remembering it".*

Suggestion #1:

Play music when students enter your room, to minimize transition time. It helps ensure appropriate behaviour. Music with a beat of 50 to 70 per minute (matching students' heart rates) helps calm the brain. Suggested music could include classical, jazz, New Age, Celtic, Native American, and nature sounds.

Suggestion #2: (grade 1/2 classroom)

To assist students in recalling information following instruction, have them walk, march or dance around the room to high-energy, fast-paced music. Periodically, stop the music and have students stand in small groups and discuss the concepts learned. Repeat, but form different groups each time.

Think-Pair-Share

Students listen while the teacher poses a question or a task, and are then given quiet time to think about the answer on their own and write something.

Then they're paired with a neighbour to discuss their responses, *noting similarities and differences in their thinking*. Students encourage their partners to *clarify and justify responses* using appropriate language strategies (e.g. *"How did you decide that?"*, *"In other words, you think that..."*). Assign a time limit.

After rehearsing responses with a partner, students are invited to share with the class.

The ideas in this post came from 'Mentor Tips', a publication by the PRSD AISI team.